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ABSTRACT

These four issues of a bulletin on the use of dialogue journals in foreign language teaching include these articles: "Dialogue Journals and Reading Comprehension"; "Secret Messages: Dialogue Journals as a Reading Event"; "The Teacher's Writing as Text"; "Using Dialogue Journals in Reading Classes"; "Effective Teacher Change: A Focus on the Individual"; "ESL Teachers as Language Advocates for Children"; "'Sheltered English' Applied to Writing"; "Writing and Reflecting on Writing"; "Making Language Connections: Writing in ESL Pull-Out Classes"; "Using Dialogue Journals to Develop a Discourse-Based Performance Measure"; a review of "Teacher Strategies: Linguistic Devices for Sustaining Interaction" (a dissertation); "'How Is Your Weekend and What Did You Do': Second Language Learners' Understanding of Audience"; "The Dialogue Journal and Migrant Education"; "Features of Semi-Literate Writing: One Student's Development"; "Using Dialogue Journals for a More Meaningful Cultural Orientation Class"; "Moving Students from Frozen to More Creative Language Use"; "Yes, Teacher, There Is Hope!"; "A Principal's View of Dialogue Journals"; "The Safety Valve"; "Dialogue in Marketing Education"; "Time--The Greatest Gift"; "Research on Teacher Strategies: Exploring the Effects of Glib Responses to Journal Entries"; "Mapping Conversational Roles"; and "Interactive Writing with Computers: One Solution to the Time Problem." Recent publications and notes from the field are also included. (MSE)

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DIALOGUE

Jana Staton, Editor and Others

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Dialogue

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
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Dialogue Journals as a Reading Event

"When I come in here, I always flip the pages, wanting to read your opinions or stories.....I really enjoy writing and get feedback from you as we're a lot the same and I'm glad to know that we are similar to each other." — a student at Gallaudet College, writing to his teacher, 1982

The dialogue journal began as a way to communicate in the classroom (and probably in other settings not yet documented), not as a writing practice or method. However, about the time the dialogue journal came to the attention of some researchers (1979), there was a new focus on the need for children to write more, and on the lack of meaningful writing in schools. This new focus helped generate immediate interest in dialogue journals as a writing event. But obviously, the dialogue is also a powerful reading event. This issue of DIALOGUE is one way of re-directing our focus from the writing to the reading benefits of using dialogue journals, and of stressing the reading-writing connection.

This year, every education conference seems to be about the "reading-writing" connection. All too often, the connection is being made in the rhetoric of the article rather than in classroom practices being described. There are certainly theoretical reading-writing connections to be found—in the similarity of cognitive processing required, in the use of schema for understanding and planning/predicting, in the way that reading powerful literature supports good writing and that involvement in one's own writing leads to excitement for reading.

But dialogue journals offer something more than theory. They are a practical instance of reading and writing bound together in a single functional experience. In this issue, two teachers' accounts of the use of dialogue journals for reading and two research-supported reflections focus on the richness of the reading involved in the dialogue, and its clear influence on the more visible aspect of the process--students' writing.

We are fond of saying that "dialogue journals are like a friendly conversation, in which two participants write back and forth to each other." We want to amend that to read "...write back and forth to each other, thus constructing a mutually interesting reading text about self-generated topics, a text which has purpose and meaning for both readers." •

Research Report

Dialogue Writing: Analysis of Student-Teacher Interactive Writing in the Learning of English as a Second Language, by Kreeft, Shuy, Staton, Reed and Morroy. 1984.

A research and practitioner report on dialogue journal use in an ESL classroom. Available for $25. Send orders to Joy Peyton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics; make checks payable to Center for Applied Linguistics.

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Dialogue Journals and Reading Comprehension

Roger W. Shuy

Traditionally, it is thought that children first learn to speak, then read, then write. No acceptable research or theory serves as a basis for approaching reading before writing and speaking before reading. Rather, the notion seems to have evolved as an artifact of institutional schooling. That is, children learn to talk before they even enter school. Once school starts, the practice is to teach children to understand the written symbols that represent talk, as a decoding of speech. Finally, once this is learned, children are taught to encode or write on paper that which they can now read or decode.

What has contributed most to this concept that reading and writing are separable tasks is our need for linearity. There seems to be, in the human mind, a need to reduce topics to some sort of minimal and necessarily sequential units. The widely cherished notion of a taxonomy of basic educational objectives that can be operationally defined is partially responsible for this. However administratively or industrially attractive such a notion may be, it runs afoul of the even more basic idea of our essential humanity. It may be possible to build lawn mowers in such a manner, but human learning turns out to be considerably more complex. By gaining industrial efficiency, we tend to lose our humanity. By answering the question "how?" we tend to lose sight of the human question, "why?"

While it seemed reasonable, or at least efficient, to assume the linear hypothesis of speaking to reading to writing, this assumption has led to great problems in helping children acquire literacy. For one thing, the material to be read was often very unlike the talk in which a young child regularly engages. If learning is to be facilitated, predictability is crucial. Children simply do no talk the way their books read. It also followed, logically, that if what they read was the model for what they wrote, their writing would also be very unlike the way they talk. The basic problem, as formulated here, is that learning to read and write, unlike learning to speak, has been situated in unrealistic and unpredictable models of language.

Our first research on dialogue journal writing (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft and Mrs. R. 1982) pointed the way to a solution to this problem. Dialogue writing is speech-like in nature. [It captures the natural phrasing children already use in understanding what others say]. It is closer by far to the actual talk of both participants than any of their writing in school contexts could be. Our first question then became, "Is dialogue journal writing more functional, more user-friendly, more developmentally facilitated than essay (or other more formulaic) writing?" Research has answered this question very positively. It is.

But there is more. If it is true that children learn to think more clearly, write better and communicate more effectively in dialogue journal writing, what can be said about their reading development in this medium? Is dialogue journal reading more functional, more user-responsive, more developmentally adapted for comprehension than basal readers?

In all of the dialogue journals analyzed to date, it is clear that even with non-native English speakers, the teacher's writing is processed in such a way that it is largely comprehended, suggesting that such reading provides excellent comprehension practice.

An objection might be made, however: "Isn't it easier to read language when it is written about a familiar topic, especially a topic which the readers introduced themselves?" Of course it is, but shouldn't reading be learned in familiar contexts, with known audiences, on familiar topics? Isn't such practice at the very core of "starting with children where they are?"

In one analysis of student comprehension of dialogue journal text, I studied the journal of a high school student at a school for the deaf. Diana (not her real name) scored at third grade reading level on the Stanford Achievement Test adapted for administration to the hearing impaired (SAT-HI).

I took her dialogue journal for the year, and compared her reading comprehension of her teacher's writing with her SAT-measured comprehension. Diana scored 92% accuracy in

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understanding the teacher's questions, as determined by my analysis. She scored 100% in responding appropriately (i.e., with understanding) to the teacher's propositions.

Why, then, would a student achieve such a low score on the reading test? When the questions on the SAT were analyzed linguistically, it was revealed that in 40% of these questions, a preposition (in, on, toward, under, etc.) framed the key words for comprehension and selection of the correct answer. Preposition meaning is one of the most difficult for non-native speakers to process. Diana, being deaf, is not a native English speaker any more than a Bolivian student is. Her SAT scores, therefore, were determined by a disproportionately large quantity of the most difficult (for her) grammatical forms.

In her dialogue journal, where much more context is available surrounding the most difficult prepositions, she processed the meaning in an almost native-like manner, as shown by her intelligent responses. This suggests not only the inadequacies of isolated, de-contextualized sentences as an efficient means of measuring comprehension but also that dialogue journal interactions are an excellent way to acquire a language and reading competence, largely because of the contextual redundancy that natural language contains.

Diana's ability to comprehend dialogue journal text better than test question prose is a clear product of the predictability and contextual relevance of the stimulus language encountered. The revered linear process of speaking to reading to writing obviously does not work for a deaf child. It is likely, in fact, that such linearity does not work for any learner. Writing and reading are inseparable tasks and the closer the material to be read and written is to natural language, the more efficient the learning will be. ●

BACK ISSUES

Back issues of the newsletter, with a history of dialogue journal research and a bibliography, are available for $5. Send orders to Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics; make checks payable to HANDBOOK PRESS.

Secret Messages: Dialogue Journals as a Reading Event

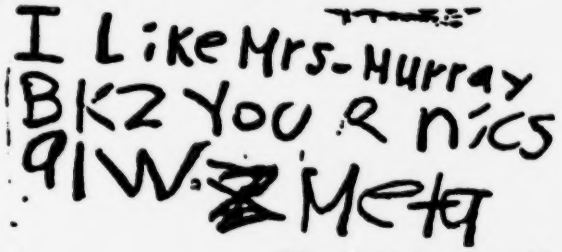
- Lynn Murray, Fairfax County Public Schools

Throw away the alphabet flash cards? Dispense with the boring drills? Forget the inane workbook pages? My kindergarteners first began keeping personal journals the day after I returned from a writing symposium where I heard of using journals in kindergarten.

I teach in a "special needs" school--a school identified as having a large number of low-income students, a high minority population, and a discrepancy between achievement and performance. I can't assume that my students will come to school with any knowledge of the alphabet or sound/symbol relationships; and in many cases they do not recognize their names in print. So when Richard drew a picture of a dog in his journal, decided dog was spelled "D" and asked, "Teacher, what shape that?," I saw journal writing as an effective and efficient teaching method to meet their needs. He was learning letter recognition, phonics, visual memory, and expressive language.

My children wrote in their journals daily and progressed through the stages of using initial sounds, to adding an ending sound, to using vowels medially, and began writing phrases and sentences. It was exciting and rewarding--for me and the children! They discovered they could communicate through the written word, a revelation that was especially valuable to the children learning English as a second language. (I have a mixture of native and nonnative English speakers in my class.) I was so convinced of the efficacy of journal writing that I never missed an opportunity to attend a workshop or to give an inservice on writing with five-year-olds.

I returned one afternoon from yet another workshop to find in Claire's journal her protest of my absence: "I LIKE MRS. MURRAY BECAUSE YOU ARE NICE. ALWAYS MEETING."



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By this time, I wasn't particularly flattered by the first sentence because I knew all too well the process by which Claire had produced it. Anyone writing with young children is aware of the "I like" or "I love" syndrome. Everyone knows "I," and someone in the class very early learns to spell "like" or "love." After that, labels, name tags, signs, book titles, previous journal entries, in fact anything that can be copied provides the ending to the sentence, without regard to meaning. In Claire's case she had learned to spell "like" from a classmate, copied my name from the classroom door, and added "because you are nice" after flipping back through her journal to a page where I had insisted she tell me why she liked someone. The "always meeting" part was probably true. In other students' journals there were entries such as "I love November" (from a calendar) and "I like crayola" (mis-copied instead of the word "orange" from a crayon). "I LOVE TSRTPC" was at least a good effort of spelling triceratops, but this student was capable of so much more.

I LOVE TSRTPC

I was getting frustrated with the writing.

After a few months, the daily personal journals weren't as exciting for the children, or for me; everyone was getting lazy. It wasn't only that the writing was becoming so predictable and hum-drum, but that I felt the expectations for these children were too low. Having seen their progress and their initiative in other areas, I knew they could continue to grow here.

We were all ready for a change when a colleague suggested trying dialogue journals to stimulate writing. I explained to the children that after they read aloud to me the page they had written in their journal that day, I would write each of them a "secret message" which we would read together the next day before writing again. The message was a response to what they had written, and sometimes included a question in hope of getting them to expand on a topic. What pleased me was their enthusiasm for "reading" and answering the secret message even before we went over it the next day. The idea that they could read on their own spread quickly through the class. I couldn't decide who was more pleased, Connie or I, when she brought me the following page and announced, "I already answered."

I LIKE

TNDrHrT

BAr

Dear Connie,

Do you have a tenderheart bear? MDo you have a fororite stuffed animal? Can you tell me about it?

YES

BOXBANNY

It was not unusual for a child to copy a word I had used and take it home for help from parents (any involvement from home was a very desirable consequence). And the cooperation among the children, helping each other figure out the message, was another bonus which I hadn't counted on. "I've got the same word in my journal. I think it's where"; or "I know that! It's pet."

One aspect of dialogue journals which is most gratifying is that it is possible to truly individualize reading instruction. Twenty-five children? No. Twenty-five reading groups!

Each dialogue journal session with a child is an opportunity for assessment, and can be turned into a tailor-made lesson with a specific objective. Whether a student is ready to learn contractions and compound words or is at the earlier stage of visual discrimination, of finding a word that starts with the same letter, each day each student gets the lesson that he or she needs. •

The Teacher's Writing as Text

- Jana Staton

In a written dialogue, the teacher and student together are constructing a reading text, using the student's interests, concerns, and vocabulary as the basis for the teacher's elaboration. While there is little argument that this constitutes a valid reading event, we may ask how cognitively demanding is the teacher's writing as text. One way to go about answering that question is to examine the written text of the dialogue in comparison to the texts of basal readers which are considered appropriate for the child's reading level. Does the teacher's writing, done quickly and without thought of controlled vocabulary or complexity of text structure, match the quality of writing in basal readers?

As an example of how this research can be conducted, I choose one student's dialogue journal and the assigned basal reader from one of Leslee Reed's classes at Alexandria Avenue School. Michael had recently come to this country from Burma; at the beginning of sixth grade he was tested and assigned to a Level 4 reader (approximately second grade) in one of the major basal reading series.

The basal reader texts at Level 4 are written in very simplified prose, and rely on the illustrations for much of their cohesion and meaning. A sample of the text from one story is given below:

> Kay said, "Here comes a man.
> Who is he, Dad?
> Is he the zoo man?"
>
> "Yes, he is," said Dad.
>
> "The elephant sees the man,"
> said Kay.
> "This elehant can run, Dad."

During the first weeks of school, Michael and the teacher were also reading and writing together in their dialogue journal. On the sixth day, Michael's entry and the teacher's response read like this:

Michael: (September 26, 1980)
Mrs. Reed, you know I'm live in Burmese. The Burma school is no good. you know why? At the Burma school is no free lunch. At the America school is good free lunch and the games is funny games. At the Burma school is no games. Only is you can fight so I don't like the Burma school. The America school is "you very good student and you can skip to the 6 grate or 5 grate anything"! So I like a-am America school. Where are you come from? How old are you Mrs. Reed. You Know Mrs. Reed, here is all is good friend.

Mrs. Reed:
I'm glad you are at Alexandria Avenue school. you study and work so hard so you will be very smart. It is good to learn to play games to get exercise. To grow well everyone needs to eat a good lunch. Your mind works better if you have eaten the right food. I was born in Idaho. It is in the United States. I am very old! Yes! Everyone is glad to be our friend so we do not hit or fight.

I analyzed these two entries and two from the spring of the year for syntactic complexity and discourse structure, in comparison to the basal reader text. The table below shows the comparison of T-unit scores on five passages:

	T-Unit Score
Assigned Basal Text	5.27
Michael's Fall DJ	8.3
Reed's Fall DJ	8.8
Michael's Spring DJ	11.1
Mrs. Reed's Spring DJ	17.8 9

These scores reflect real differences in the text structure. The basal reader has only one complex sentence. Michael on the sixth day of writing does better: two compound and one complex. The teacher's response matches his rather precisely: 3 complex sentences, all describing conditional relationships between actions and events. By spring the teacher has greatly

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increased the complexity of her writing, demanding much greater comprehension and inferencing from the student. Here is a sample of her writing:

Mrs. Reed, April 10, 1981

Yes, I will explain why every class was very quiet for one minute at 9 o'clock this morning. In Atlanta, a big city in our United States, there have been 23 children killed by someone or maybe more than one person. They have not caught that very sick person. We were very quiet to give us a chance to remember that 23 have been killed. 23 families have been saddened and feel so sad because their children are dead. It gives us a chance to remember that even here in Los Angeles there are sick people. Boys and girls must stay away from strangers and even stay away from people they know, if those people do not act the way they should!

An even more important difference comes in the discourse structure and functions found in the dialogue interactions. The basal reader at this level is filled with descriptions and narratives that are cognitively undemanding of the student. In the dialogue journal, in contrast, both Michael and the teacher are writing arguments, arguing for a point of view and offering evidence to support it. The teacher's writing discusses relationships between events and actions, and uses causal and temporal conjunctive devices--<u>if</u>, <u>because</u>, <u>in order to</u>. Her text not only matches the way Michael thinks and writes, but it demands that he think. She demands inferencing and drawing of conclusions in order for her text to be understood.

Michael's production of written language gives the teacher continual evidence of what he can comprehend in reading, and forms the lower boundary of his zone of proximal development. The teacher's response seems to be "just beyond his grasp"--demanding greater inferencing and synthesis of knowledge, and changing as he provides evidence of growing comprehension. ●

Using Dialogue Journals in Reading Classes

- Carol Harmatz-Levin, formerly at Georgetown U.

Dialogue journal writing requires dialogue journal reading. It is under this premise that I have justified using journals in reading classes. I discovered, however, that journal exchanges can provide more than personal, interactive language practice. Much like Leslee Reed, whose concept of dialogue journals evolved out of bits of paper overflowing with communication, I decided to elicit in writing my university EFL students' feelings about the reading process. I began by following up on a homework assignment and a classroom discussion. I had asked students a week earlier to spend fifteen minutes a day reading something of their own choice in English; this was not to include homework assignments. In class we had been discussing ways to learn vocabulary, and students had been sharing "tricks" that worked for them.

So, without a thought towards using dialogue journals with this class (I was already using them daily in another one), I passed out slips of paper and asked students what they had been reading and what they did in order to remember new vocabulary. When I read their responses that evening, I realized that the process of reading was unique to each one of them. Some had very definite, established procedures for attacking their reading material; some spent time reading but were not very involved in the process. Some felt insecure. Most of the students, however, seemed eager to share their feelings and methods in this non-threatening, non-judgmental context.

I continued our "conversations" in weekly entries for the seven-week session, and although we didn't confine ourselves exclusively to the topic of reading, I emerged from the experience with a better idea of what my students were going through with regard to reading and how I could help. I also learned that some students had very healthy strategies for learning vocabulary. Some used techniques such as studying the same vocabulary over a period of time, reading texts of similar topics, or writing personal dictionaries in English with new words in context.

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There were various types of benefits to the students from this kind of directed dialogue journal writing. One is that they can get feedback about their reading processes--are they on the right track or not? One student's approach to learning new vocabulary was to look in the dictionary whenever he encountered a new word while reading. When I suggested that he not turn to the dictionary before trying to guess the meaning, he responded:

S: *For me is difficult to guess because I haven't had a rich vocabulary. I tried to guess but some times I don't get the right mean. I mean, a exact mean which I can use the same word for other ways.*

T: *When we guess from context, we can only understand the word in <u>that</u> situation--not in others (unless we guess again). If you can understand the general idea of the story, you don't <u>need</u> the dictionary. If you use the dictionary for <u>all</u> the words you don't know, then you'll have a LIST. That's all. Only a list. Maybe your expectations are too high.*

S: *Thank you for your help. I will try this way. Some times I want to know everything at ones and this is very difficult thing to do. I have to thing that I will study Englihs for 5 years and I will have time.*

Besides giving feedback, I was also able to expand students' repertoires of techniques without prescribing the same method for everyone. I was cautious with my wording so students would feel encouraged rather than obligated to try new approaches.

T: *You might want to consider reading something else along with your political material. It would feel good to read something light, easy and fun, too. Then, you would also have the experience of doing some reading that is <u>not</u> slow. What do you think?*

S: *I think so. But sometimes it boors me to red funny things or light. What I will try to do is to find other topics that are not political but maybe interesting for me. Maybe history or science. I think I need more vocabulary so I'm going to try to change topics.* •

New Dialogue Journal Research in ESL

A new study of dialogue journal writing is now underway at CAL, funded by NIE through the Center for Language Education and Research. In this project we will be working closely with K-9 teachers in the Washington, D.C. area as well as other parts of the country who are using or want to use dialogue journals as part of their writing program with limited English proficient students. We will be holding workshops and documenting classroom practice and student development in dialogue journals and on other writing tasks. We will also be conducting a nationwide survey of ESL teachers who have used or are now using dialogue journals. This project will continue for five years, and we will be reporting to you periodically on progress and findings. If you wish to dialogue with us about this project, write to Joy Peyton at CAL. ALSO LET JOY KNOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO COMPLETE A COPY OF THE SURVEY FORM. (Pg. 9)

After their initial dialogue entry, several students confessed that they didn't like to read or that they were slow readers even in their native language. By airing these negative feelings and trying to get closer to their source, students tended to feel less anxious about reading. One such student's entry began, "The problem that I had is I don't like to read in English and I try my best but I juest read 10 pags then I quit reading." By the end of our journal writing, she was the one suggesting possible reading topics and after we had discussed her overuse of the dictionary, she agreed to at least try not to use it so much.

In conclusion, effective dialogue journal writing may assume various forms. This was my first experience with guiding the topic of an entire class in a single direction. Although some students found this confining and changed the topic, most used the opportunity as a forum to discuss their reading, either with a sense of pride or with insecurity. In all cases, the dialogue journal writing gave each student the opportunity to discuss their feelings privately with a non-judgmental partner and to feel more positive about reading in a foreign language. •

LESLEE'S PAGE

Effective Teacher Change: A Focus on the Individual

- Leslee Reed

I can't count how many times I have attended conferences or advisory meetings where the topic for discussion was to find out what teachers need in order to be more effective. As a teacher myself, who must usually rush from a classroom with chalk-dust still on my hands after the usual day of hectic and unexpected events, I listen intently, hoping to find out "how and why" or "how and when" or even "if and when."

Often grand ideas emerge involving better teacher training, better inservice education of regular or ESL teachers, better materials including software, etc. There is always much talk of concepts, and the need to make sure that every teacher really understands the concepts.

Later as I mull over these kinds of meetings, my frustrations grow as I think about what is not said, by me as a teacher, or by others. What is it that teachers really need, in order to grow and be more effective? How can the advisors, coordinators and administrators who are truly interested in helping teachers offer us the most help?

What seems to be missing from the dialogue at such meetings is a focus on the individual, either teacher or student. Teachers are teachers because they truly want to teach. Requiring all of us to take the same course so we will all be able to handle a certain "type" of child "properly" or "correctly" is a denial of the very art of teaching. All teachers, just like all students, learn, adapt and use or reject ideas depending on their own experiences and backgrounds. We cannot create teacher/robots who will teach all students in an identical manner according to some correct precept.

I see teaching as a honed skill, individual to each person. It has been my experience with many many student teachers that I have learned far more from them than they ever did from me! The very best ones, after having watched me teach, using the same group of students and following my techniques, drew on their own experience and their own strengths and created a lesson that was their very own.

To enhance teaching, we as teachers need to be inspired and trusted to find our own way in using these new ideas and approaches, so that the individual teacher can be just that, an individual. How about inspiration for teachers who want observable and digestible evidence of their success, and suggest options for application and evaluation?

The second factor which gets lost in the platitudes and educational jargon is attitude. Attitude, whether student's or teacher's, has a powerful bearing on the outcome of any lesson or skill being developed. For the most part our students acquiesce to our instructional presentations. But, depending on the stresses in their lives at any given moment, our lessons may or may not be inculcated into their thinking.

How often has every single word of a lesson fallen on ears closed because of the attitude of the learner? How can a student be involved with the "lighthouse lighting" sequence when it has no relevance for him and the uppermost thought in his mind is whether or not the landlord is going to make the family get out? Or when the concern which is nagging at a very conscious level is what will happen to the father or uncle who is on 'parole' (whatever that is)? School pressures are intense, especially for ESL students. Frequently they must be the voice of their parents, translating terms that they neither understand nor have enough competence in their native language to comprehend. How responsible they have to be!

In our discussions of the knowledge and effective practices which all teachers must have, we get lost in abstract concepts, educational jargon, and curricular objectives. We even convince ourselves at times that studying the proper technique, taking the correct classes, and fulfilling the requirements for getting credentialled, make a teacher a teacher. Teaching for most teachers, however, is not one particular plan or a set pattern or formula. It is the constant evaluation, minute by minute, of what is happening; the ability and the fortitude to change a lesson in midstream if necessary, to reevaluate and alter direction, to read the blank faces as well as the eager ones. Active teaching requires a multitude of sensory approaches by the teacher,

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especially for those students handicapped by attitude, language or an individual inability to learn the way others do.

Please, I want to say, help me, a teacher who really wants to improve. Have I missed something in all this talk? Are you really concerned about me?

All teachers, as well as all students, can become inspired. Attitudes can be altered when minds are free to focus. As I struggle to teach my students, or to give workshops for teachers, it is imperative that uppermost in my mind is the fact that I am not teaching a lesson or a concept. I am teaching real, warm human beings with deep concerns, fears, and doubts, each as individual as a fingerprint. •

Survey

As part of the new Dialogue Journal Project at CAL, we are conducting a survey about dialogue journal use in ESL. If you have used or are now using dialogue journals with ESL students and would be willing to complete a brief survey questionnaire, please return this slip to Joy Peyton at CAL.

TO: Joy Peyton
Dialogue Journal Project
Center for Applied Linguistics
1118 - 22nd Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20037

Please send me a survey questionnaire.

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____

Recent Dialogue Journal Publications

Joy Kreeft Peyton. Literacy through written interaction. To appear in Passage: a journal of refugee education. Spring, 1986.

Nancy Rhodes. Dialogue journals—Trends and applications for foreign students. Tapping Our Resources: ESOL Staff Development Workshop. Board of Education of Montgomery County, Rockville, MD. Spring, 1985.

Jana Staton. Using dialogue journals for developing thinking, reading, and writing with hearing-impaired students. The Volta Review. Vol. 87, no. 5. September, 1985.

Terry Shepherd, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, writes that he presented similar ideas in three publications, written many years ago! In these articles he discusses the power of written dialogue for developing oral language with children who would otherwise not communicate at all!

"Logues for Communication." Elementary English (NCTE). XLV: 8 pp. 1080-82. December, 1966.

"The language experience approach..." Occasional Papers on Linguistics #1. Proceedings, First International Conference on Frontiers in Language Proficiency and Dominance Testing, Southern Illinois University, 1977. ERIC ED 144 400 (focuses on second language learning).

"Living with a Child with Autistic Tendencies," (1979), Working with Parents of Handicapped Children: A Book of Readings for School Personnel, M.L. Henniger & E.M. Nesselroad Eds., University Press of America: Lanham, MD, 1984.

Handouts/Articles Available

Joy Kreeft Peyton has a handout that she uses in workshops with ESL teachers at all levels. Copies of Nancy's articles and Joy's handout can be obtained by writing to Joy Peyton, CAL. •

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Dialogue Journals In Teacher Training

In teacher training I have found journals to be successful for conferencing with teachers about my observations of their classes. During a week that I have scheduled a conference with a teacher, I try to observe in their class every day. After each observation I write a note in the teacher's journal.

Before beginning the conference, I read over the week's notes and use them as the basis for the conference. After the conference I give the notebook to the teacher and ask him or her to summarize the week in the journal or to respond in some other way. One time I wrote some rather critical, but (I hoped) constructive comments in a teacher's journal. I handed it to the teacher on Friday, and worried all weekend that I had been too critical. On Monday morning, she returned the journal to me. In it she had written a long response actually thanking me for my comments and discussing how she planned to change her lesson plan for that day. I felt relieved, and I wondered whether she would have been able to tell me those things in person.

Using journals in the teacher observation process has been valuable for me in several ways. It allows the teacher and supervisor to have ongoing, informal, private dialogue. Teachers can take time to read comments which, if only spoken, could be forgotten or misunderstood. In addition, when it is time to write a final evaluation, it is easy to see themes which repeat themselves, and it is much easier to write an in-depth evaluation, citing specific journal entries as evidence. o

-Christina Herbert, Asst. ESL Coord.
Phanat Nikhom (Thailand) Refugee Camp

In Special Education

As coordinator of special services for 101 handicapped students, ages 16-19, I have been using "Dialogue" with all four of my English teachers to help them in their efforts to reach students in their classes. Our school is 100% mainstreamed, so the teachers are able to use Dialogue for <u>all</u> students in their classes. We love it! And we thank you!

-K. McCarthy, Troy, OH

One of the activities of the New York City Writing Project is a series of in-service courses in New York City high schools. Getting teachers and students involved with journals and specifically dialogue journals has been one of our successes. The May issue was particularly interesting because of the increasing special education population in New York City high schools. The dialogue journal has been our best way to involve these students and their teachers with writing. One special education teacher wrote her own journal and gave it to her students for their responses. One of her students came to school almost only when it was his turn to read the teacher's journal. Indeed, the first time that his turn to read the journal came around, the teacher did not want to give him her journal, since he would keep it over the weekend and she feared never seeing him or the journal again. Monday began without the student, but a few minutes after nine, he came running in the door, slowed to a walk as he came up the aisle, and coolly laid the journal on the teacher's desk. The teacher reported that his responses were insightful and quite lengthy. •

-Maurice Bolmer, N.Y. City Writing Project

In Teaching Adult ESL

"To help their English run like a river--"

I heard about the dialogue journal at an ESL Teachers' Conference in Washington State. I immediately started to use it with refugee adults in the middle level class to ease the flow of language into spontaneous thought and get the students away from the stilted practice of workbook English. I explained that the journals we made were for private conversation between each student and me. They could write about anything they liked or tell me about their last trip to a park, etc.

By the end of the first quarter, the writing of the students had doubled. It was flowing and spontaneous. They repeatedly wanted me to correct their work but I explained the exercise papers and compositions were to be corrected; the journals were to help their English run like a river, freely and easily. They laughed and were often frustrated when they couldn't say something smoothly. When they asked me how to say something, I helped them on a blank piece of paper. I had mixed feelings about doing this, but it didn't happen too often and it did relieve their frustration. (I am trying to learn Norwegian and I know frustration can add a sense of weary defeat

to language learning.) I decided helping them with idioms and phrases oiled the continual flow of communication--my goal. •

-Marie Rice, Takoma, WA

With Native English Speakers in High School

I am a high school teacher in a year-round school. After hearing about dialogue journals from Sara Sill in the USC Writing Project, I began to use the journal with one senior writing class of about 20 students on the first day of the semester. As I'm sure you have heard before, I wasn't sure that the idea would work with older students (Sara had said that it was being used at all levels but the truth is I wasn't sure that I could keep up with the answering of 20 students). I was delighted with the results, so I began using them with two other classes (about 70 students).

The students were allowed to turn in their journals whenever they wanted to do so; I gave them credit for the amount of writing they did, not for the quality of the writing. That way I did not get every journal every day; in fact, I answered between 15 and 20 daily.

I was truly amazed by what happened in the journals. Some students who would not talk in class became garrulous in writing. Others used it to develop short stories and fantasies. One young man ceased doing any other assignments and wrote wonderfully humourous tall tales about why he had failed to turn in his vocabulary sentences. After he developed some confidence in me, he wrote at length about being an abused child. It may have been another fantasy, but the pain he poured onto those pages rang true. He gave me permission to use this quote, after describing what his father had done to him.

> *I had to tell someone. Its easier to write it down then to say it to someones face. you know I think I have forgiven him for doing that to me but I ain't sure. If you ever ask me oraly about this I will deny I know what you are talking about.*

If anything convinced me that the journals are a priceless tool, not only for developing writing skills, but also for improving understanding and communication between me and my students, it was this misspelled and ungrammatical cry. I have also found that I prefer reading their journals to grading their journals to grading their papers. The journals really take a load off the teacher. I have found a way to get the students to write spontaneously, without jumping through hoops to give them a pre-writing experience.

-Cynthia Shelton, Long Beach, CA

Presentations

Joy Kreeft Peyton and Jodi Crandall of CAL spoke at the Foreign Service Institute on "Dialogue Journals: Making the Reading/Writing Connection," as part of the English Language Teaching Seminar for the Overseas Briefing Center.

Two presentations on dialogue journals are planned for the TESOL '86 convention in Anaheim, March 3-7, 1986. As part of a panel on journal writing, Joy Kreeft Peyton will review recent research on dialogue journals with ESL students and Margaret Walworth of Gallaudet College will talk about dialogue journals with deaf college students. Also, Joy Peyton has proposed to present a paper on acquisition of grammatical morphology in ESL students' dialogue journal writing. We don't know yet if our proposals have been accepted, but look for us on the program!

Jana Staton will talk on the teacher's writing as reading text at the Maryland State Reading Association in February, 1986, and the Virginia State Reading Association in March, 1986.

Far East Travels

Three of our favorite people have been or are now somewhere in Asia this fall, doing their best to encourage (we almost said convert) everyone to try dialogue journals. Chances are that those they have visited will soon start conducting dialogue journal workshops of their own, so, those of you in Asia, watch for them.

Nancy Rhodes of the Center for Applied Linguistics spoke in November to an applied linguistics graduate seminar at the Chinese University of Hong Kong on the use of dialogue journals in the EFL classroom.

Frances A. Davis, Princeton Research Forum, gave three lectures which included information about dialogue journals for the English department, International School of the Sacred Heart in Tokyo; in Hong Kong for about 80 social services, rehabilitation and vocational counselors and deaf educators, and at the Conassion School for the Deaf in Singapore. She also managed to conduct a workshop for teachers in the refugee camp at Phanat Nikhom, Thailand.

Madeline Adkins, a research assistant on Joy Kreeft Peyton's NIE grant, is now teaching in Japan at the National Language Laboratory School in Kyoto, and has begun to conduct workshops for fellow teachers there. •

NEXT ISSUE: Dialogue Journals in ESL, EFL, and Bilingual Education

The use of dialogue journals in ESL, EFL, and bilingual education classrooms is booming and growing at all levels, from kindergarten to adult education, and from beginning to advanced levels of English proficiency. Our next issue will focus on this major area of education, from both a practitioner and a research point of view. Please let us know if you would like to submit an article, either presenting your practice or summarizing your research. Information or observations in the form of letters are also welcome. WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU. Send to Joy Peyton at CAL.

Subscription Form

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☐ Enclosed also is $5 for the Back Issues of Dialogue including a history of dialogue journal use, publications list, and dissertation abstracts.

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of a National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyze the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 - 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

DIALOGUE appears approximately three times a year, at a cost of $3.00 to cover duplication and mailing. A volume of back issues is available for $5.00. Make checks payable to Jana Staton.

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Dialogue

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
Shelley Gutstein

DIALOGUE JOURNALS IN ESL SETTINGS

This issue grows out of the tremendous appeal of dialogue journals with students learning English as a second language (ESL). Dialogue journals are being used in as many different ESL contexts as we can think of: at early elementary levels, with teenagers, and with adults; in both adult basic education and university classes; for early literacy development as well as for discussion of advanced literary texts; in language arts and content classes--social studies, math, and science; in ESL pull-out and mainstream classes with a few ESL students. Four sessions at the TESOL Convention in March focused on dialogue journal writing. Why has this practice caught on so quickly and made so much sense in so many different settings?

Possibly the most important reason may also be the most obvious: dialogue journal writing allows genuine communication--an opportunity for a student learning a new language and culture to use the language in a meaningful, functional context, with another person who is more proficient. As Courtney Cazden points out in the first article of this issue, when our educational methods and materials become so carefully structured and compartmentalized that the socially embedded, interactive nature of language and learning gets lost in our curriculum, we need to search for new opportunities for establishing human relationships with language.

Everyone we talk to has told us how enjoyable dialogue journal writing is, both for them and for their students. Even students with a history of poor school performance, who have done very little reading or writing and shown little interest in anything related to schoolwork, have blossomed in the dialogue journal interaction. Their enthusiasm, often confined initially to this context, has eventually spilled over to their other work. How else will students become invested in language and take pleasure in using it than by using it for enjoyable purposes?

Even we have been surprised at the versatility of dialogue journals. Leslee Reed, with whom we first worked, developed her own approach, to suit her and her students' needs. In this issue she discusses how the concept of sheltered English, so popular in ESL education today, applies to written dialogue as well. As other teachers hear about the practice, they quickly adapt the basic framework (a regular, ongoing, written conversation) to meet their particular needs. Initial questions that we had about the adaptability of the practice are being answered by students and teachers working together to find those answers.

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OPEN HOUSE AT AERA

FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 1986, 5-7 P.M.

For anyone using or interested in dialogue journals or research thereon--come and find out what others are doing!

Sheraton Palace Hotel

Hosted by Jana Staton and Roger Shuy
(Check at desk for Staton/Shuy room number).

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Linda Hughes addresses one question in this issue: How can written dialogue be begun and maintained with very young students in an ESL pull-out program, who have little exposure to written communication and little time in the pull-out class?

The written interaction is a valuable source of knowledge--certainly about students' interests, concerns, and progress, but also about the teacher's own effectiveness in communicating with different students. Linda Sellevaag discusses patterns of development in the writing and attitudes about writing of university ESL students. Shelley Gutstein explores the possibility of using dialogue journals as a performance measure of students' communicative ability. The review of Robby Morroy's dissertation identifies teacher strategies that promote student communication.

With dialogue journal writing, we have rediscovered what we knew all along. When we find an effective practice, that involves a genuine exchange of ideas, the possibilities for its use are limitless. •

ESL Teachers as Language Advocates for Children

- Courtney B. Cazden, Harvard University

Maximizing students' time-on-task is widely advertised these days as a prescription for all our educational ills. Unfortunately, the nature of the tasks don't get nearly as much attention as the amount of time. They deserve far more attention, particularly because of the influence on the curriculum of multiple-choice tests.

An historical discussion of this influence is presented by anthropologist and social historian Shirley Brice Heath and high-school English teacher, Amanda Branscombe, drawing on Calhoun's historical analysis (1970) of *The Intelligence of a People:*

> From an historical examination of how American intelligence changed between 1750 and the mid-twentieth century, Calhoun believes that "intelligence is first of all a kind of social relation" (Calhoun, p. 28), and argues that throughout the history of American schooling, teachers and tests judge the mental capacity of students on the basis of their performance as communicator and audience. Yet, the varieties of ways in which students could learn to respond as communicator and audience decreased sharply after 1870, when schools began to place more and more emphasis on standardized written tests as measures of intelligence. Performance of disjointed skills replaced earlier emphases on holistic conceptions of communicator and audience. Levels of testing teased apart certain areas of competence in communicating, but left concealed the ways of blending these to achieve the whole: an "audience community," (Calhoun, p. 340) sharing experiences through oral and written communication.... Through mechanistic linguistic tasks, such as spelling tests and grammar drills, schools claim to impart communication skills. Yet, the academic discourse forms which lie at the heart of success in the higher levels of schooling--oral and written extended prose, sequenced explanation, and logical arguments--rarely receive explicit identification and discussion (shortened from Heath and Branscombe, 1985).

The danger of such "reductionism"--fractionating complex tasks into component parts that, no matter how well practiced, can never reconstitute the complex whole--applies to all education today. But it must be of special concern where second language learning is a significant educational goal.

What can teachers do? How can teachers advance the "intelligence"--the communicator-audience relationship--of all our students? Letter-writing, among students or between students and their teacher, is one kind of holistic writing experience that can have powerful effects. Heath and Branscombe describe the letter-writing between Branscombe's 9th grade Basic English students and her 11th and 12th grade students in a higher track General English class. Through the Northeast Bilingual Education Support Center connected with the University of Hartford (Connecticut), limited English-

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speaking children are in correspondence via an electric mail system with children around the world (Dennis Sayers, personal communication, 4/85). And between students and their teachers there are the well-documented dialogue journals.
(Excerpted from an invited plenary address at TESOL, 1985, New York City. To appear in D.S. Enright & P. Rigg (Eds.). *Children and ESL: Integrating Perspectives.* Washington, DC: TESOL.) •

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Calhoun, Daniel. 1970. *The Intelligence of a People.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Heath, Shirley Brice, & Branscombe, Amanda. 1985. 'Intelligent writing' in an audience community: Teacher, students and researcher. In S.W. Freedman (Ed.). *The Acquisition of Written Language: Revision and Response.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

"Sheltered English" Applied to Writing

- Leslee Reed

Each of us began life with the need to communicate, and we did--without grammar rules or repetitive drills. We simply developed our language through the process of playing with various sounds and words. Sounds that did not achieve our desired ends were discarded; those that advanced them were retained.

Being an active participant in the learning process, with activities and language that involve the learner, is primary to native language speakers. When a mother talks to a baby, the infant may not understand much more than the attention being showered on it, but unconscious learning is going on, and continual exposure to language prepares the child to communicate. A mother doesn't stop trying to talk to her baby just because he doesn't initially understand a complete sentence like "Daddy is coming home." Instead, she repeats, rephrases, and encourages participation--"Say, 'Daddy.'" "See Daddy come?" "Let's wave to Daddy." Neither does she explain to the baby that it is now 5:30, that Daddy should be home by now, but the traffic has been heavy today, so he will be late. Instead she uses "sheltered English," language and concepts the baby can understand and participate in, information directly relevant to the situation. Whatever is not completely understood at least imparts the sound, cadence, and feel that all of this talk has to do with "Daddy."

We are seeing that ESL students go through much the same process. We have thought that drills and practice in repeating sounds would enhance the learning of a new language, but now are finding that using "sheltered English" in the classroom assists our ESL students to communicate without overwhelming them with every word and concept that a fourth grader (for example) should know. By using objects, body language, facial expressions, pointing, and exaggerated voice tone, we communicate with them, promote their understanding, and make them an active part of classroom activities.

When I look through my own dialogue journals, I see the same kind of sheltered English being used. One student, Thuy, wrote one day:

Mrs. R why can't we play baseball why we are threw ball everytime are tomorrow we could play baseball Mrs. R yesterday I eat my brother brithday.

Since Thuy had been invoved in throwing, catching and pitching that day, I used those terms in my response:

We need to work on throwing, catching and pitching if we are to be really good ball players.

Which brother had the birthday? Did he have cake?

The next day Thuy wrote:

That is my big brother birthday that not my birthday my birthday is March 27 I like have a cake. We team have a little bit and Ray team have a log of people.

Thuy clearly understood some of what I wrote and responded to make clear whose birthday it was and to complain about the uneven teams. Oral communication in class was impossible for him at that point, but English in this sheltered context gave him the practice and the courage to continue trying.

Another student used a pattern approach in his journal.

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Today I play ball. Tomorrow I play ball The next day I play ball.

I responded:

Play ball in area 17. Play with the boys and girls of our room. Today you read about the days of the week. I write to you today. Tomorrow you will write to me.

The writer used the language of his work during the day and applied it to his own situation, repeating part of a calendar lesson that involved assembling the days of the week and matching them with scheduled P.E. activities. These words applied to him, and he wanted to write about his own activities. My response, in equally simple language, extended his writing by including some of the words he had used here with words in earlier entries.

ESL students may have questions during class lessons, but their language can prevent their asking them. Following a class activity in which many maps were compared with the globe and the distortion of land masses on different maps identified, U Chal wrote:

What map don't have distosan?

In writing, his academic curiosity was not hampered by his insecurity with oral language. My answer was in simple, clear language--"sheltered English."

The best map is the globe. It is too hard to carry so the best flat map is the equal area map. It shows almost no distortion.

Dignity and respect for the students' need to communicate, to use language to serve their felt needs, helps them to function in a new language. The individuality and the caring attitude shown through dialogue journals to the ESL student are bound to influence their view of life and their self-worth.

Writing and Reflecting on Writing

- Linda Sellevaag

Northern Virginia Community College

During the ESL essay writing course I taught at Northern Virginia Community College in the fall of 1985, the most popular activity was the weekly writing of dialogue journal entries. Many students commented on how much they enjoyed the journals, and I enjoyed reading the student entries and responding to them. This generally positive feeling toward the journals encouraged me to take a closer look at what was actually going on in this written interaction, and what changes in writing ability and attitude toward writing in English it might be generating. When I examined five dialogue journals from my class written over the course of the ten-week session, I discovered three ways in which the journals gave my students the opportunity to improve their writing abilities.

First, the journals gave my students the opportunity to increase their overall fluency. In terms of sheer quantity, in each journal I looked at, the student wrote more in later entries than in earlier entries. The only exception was, ironically, the most skilled writer in the class, who wrote very little in his last entry, stating, "Sometimes, I feel an empty space in my mind. Like now." Apparently, he was suffering from writer's block that day. Throughout the quarter he had told me that it was hard for him to write in English for just 20 minutes (the amount of time they were given for dialogue journal writing).

In addition to the greater quantity of writing, their journals showed a decrease in the number of grammatical errors. In every case, there were fewer grammatical errors per page at the end of the year than at the beginning. The extent to which this decrease can be attributed to the dialogue journal writing itself cannot, of course, be determined exactly. Other factors were

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also at work during this period. However, it seems reasonable that some of the improvement arose from the enjoyable reading and writing practice which the journals provided.

Second, students had the opportunity to express their personal concerns and to receive personal feedback. For the most part, my students did not choose to write about abstract concepts or academic topics in their journals, but about their own experiences in the past, problems in the present, and hopes for the future. Many are recent refugees and wrote about leaving their countries and coming to the U.S. One Cambodian student, who said that thinking thinking about his past still gave him a "cold sweat," expressed his gratitude at having someone read and understand his experiences:

Thanks to you that have read through the journal I wrote. You are the only one that really understands about what the writer has written. The writer would expect to have more readers like you.

In fact, some of the Asian students who were the most silent in class wrote most extensively and freely about themselves in the journal. One Vietnamese student wrote:

I have been [here] five years but I am not pretty good at communication in English. I still have trouble with express my thought so someone could understand me better and get to know more about my private life.

He seemed to find in the dialogue fostered by the journal a place where he could be understood and where he felt free to share what he was thinking and feeling about his life.

Finally, the students had an opportunity to reflect with me about their writing and about themselves as writers. Throughout the quarter, many (like the students above) shared their wish to be heard and understood. They discussed difficulties they had and wrote about wanting to improve their writing and to receive assistance in improving their skills. One student responded to my desire to know more about his country by saying:

I am very happy to hear you [are] looking forward to hearing more...[but] at the same time it makes me miserable! I am always miserable whenever I want to write something in English (as you know it is so poor!) even though my idea--I think--is not so poor.

This student, who was in fact the most sophisticated writer in the class, was correct in saying that his ideas were not poor. The journal gave me the chance to encourage him that his writing was really quite good and that he should continue with it.

Another student perhaps best summed up the impact of the journals on student writing. She stated that writing in English had always been a "handicap" for her, but that writing the journals had helped her gain confidence in her writing and overcome some of her problems:

We don't only have communication but have learned a lot from each other and at the same time we are writing in English. I always feel bad to do any writing because of the many misktakes...[It] was smart of you too not to make any corrections...When you don't know you go ahead and don't feel bad.

I need to go back now and look at what the other students said about their writing. I hope that, as a result of the journals, they also have found a context in which they "don't feel bad" about their writing.

IN PRESS IN PRESS IN PRESS

Dialogue Journal Communication: Classroom, Linguistic Social and Cognitive Views, Jana Staton, Roger Shuy, Joy Kreeft Peyton, and Leslee Reed, is now actually at ABLEX, to appear in Marcia Farr's Writing Research Series. This is a much improved version of the first NIE report (Staton, et al, 1982), with readable charts and lots of examples.

We are trying to convince ABLEX to work swiftly on the editing, so that it might come out by next year, and to make a prepublication offer to our newsletter subscribers, which should whittle the cost down somewhat. If you find yourself ordering another ABLEX book, and could add a note saying you are eager to see the Dialogue Journal volume, it would help light a fire up there in Norwood. You may also want to write for the brochure describing the entire Writing Research Series.

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Making Language Connections: Writing in ESL Pull-Out Classes

- Linda Hughes, Prince George's County Public Schools

When I decided to make reading and writing central to my teaching in my elementary-level ESL pull-out classes, I was faced with a number of interesting questions and challenges, to which I have been able to work out some solutions.

In my ESL pull-out program I spend approximately 45 minutes, two or three times a week, with my students who are in grades 1-3. I was searching for a thrust, a singular approach to use with these children that would: (1) focus on reading and writing; (2) make the best use of the short time I had with them each session; (3) enhance the learning taking place in their classes; (4) carry over from session to session and provide continuity to a pull-out program; (5) allow me to individualize my teaching; and (6) give us a product so that students could see their own progress. Dialogue journals seemed to be the answer.

To introduce the concept, I simply explained that we were going to "talk on paper." To my surprise, the idea delighted most of them. Certainly none of them had EVER done this before, and they were intrigued. I set the mood for writing by writing in my own journal while they wrote. I told them not to worry about crossing out mistakes, and showed them where I had crossed out my own. We used an assortment of different colored pens so we could write and draw, rather than the large primary pencils used in their classes.

I soon discovered that I had a lot to learn about writing with these kids. I realized the close contact between us (my classes are typically small--4-6 students) made it easier for us to talk than to write. To give these very young students the idea of a written dialogue, we started by writing everything to each other--if they had a question, they wrote it, and I did the same. Sometimes we talked to clarify what one of us had written. I would ask them to read me what they wrote or I would read them what I wrote so that they were not frustrated by their inability to decode the words. To my surprise, even the poorest readers were soon able to read much of my writing and our need to talk during writing decreased. We are now working into having a set time for writing, and I have set aside around 15 minutes of our 45 minutes together during which they write to me.

What would these young students find to write about? In general they write about what is happening to them or what is going o in class. If we have done something like make cranberry sauce for Thanksgiving, we us that as a topic for our journals. I have also encouraged them to write about the stories I read to them. The few minutes we spend together walking from their regular classroom to my small room is also very important as a time to explore together possible writing topics.

Learning how to respond to my students' writing has also been a challenge. At first I asked question after question, trying to help them write. I soon discovered that if I asked a question, the chances of getting a short-answer (even one word) response were about 95%. So instead I tried to comment on something they had said and say something about myself that related to what they had written, as in this example:

Student: *mi planinto hot*
I get tv in my ronm
(my planet [country] is hot too
I have a TV in my room.)

Teacher: *You are lucky. You have a TV in your room. That's nice. Is it a color TV? I have a color TV in my kitchen. I like to watch the news on it.*

Reviewing our entries from time to time with each child has been helpful. Both of us have been able to see growth and accomplishments, even in the brief few months of writing. One particularly striking example of growth is a little first grader, Juanito. When we first started the dialogue journals I discovered that he could not even begin to sound out a three-letter word. What could I do in writing and reading with him? The day I brought his journal to him we began to talk about the fatigue pants he often wore to school. He told me he wanted to be a soldier someday and I asked if he'd like to write "soldier." This single word, which I spelled and wrote on another piece of paper for him, was his first journal entry. His second entry, several days later, was simply "Soldier I like."

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For the next several sessions Juanito asked me to spell all of his words. He wanted the names of favorite TV stars--He Man, Wallycat, and Voltron. We'd talk and he'd draw and label his drawings while I patiently spelled the words. He also began to recognize and respond to certain written commands, such as "Draw a Voltron" or "Draw the school." He was being instructed in reading by his first grade teacher, so he'd often use the journal to list new words he'd learned in class. I kept abreast of the reading vocabulary he was practicing in class and tried to use as much of that list as possible in my entries. I felt good about being able to provide instant feedback to Juanito as he drew, read, and wrote in his journal.

Now, four months later, there has been exciting progress with Juanito. He and his ESL group are writing complete sentences in their journals, asking questions, resourcing each other on spelling and the meaning of words, and even getting so involved in this literacy event that they go to the blackboard and teach each other words. All of them are improving in their ability to decode what I write. It's hard to believe that we are really communicating now in two- and three-sentence paragraphs.

Our successes and enthusiasm are not limited to the walls of my classroom. Some kids now report to me that they are writing outside of class as well. A few are doing so well in the classes where they were previously lagging far behind that their teachers now feel they no longer need the pull-out program.

The experience of using dialogue journals with my pull-out ESL classes has convinced me that these written conversations are helping students to grow rapidly in their ability to communicate in English. I also believe they are developing an awareness of the interdependence of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the small, pull-out group, where the teacher is more accessible, they are eager to have the chance to display and practice literacy skills they are learning in their regular classes. Most important, these students are enjoying learning English and are becoming more self-confident with their use of English each day. And their journals contain a permanent record of that growth. •

Using Dialogue Journals to Develop a Discourse-Based Performance Measure

- Shelley Gutstein, Georgetown University

When we write dialogue journals with our students, our primary goal is to communicate with them, to break down social and cultural barriers, and to build positive, supportive relationships. At least on the surface, our goals have not included improving their communicative ability in English. Yet many of us have observed, albeit impressionalistically, growth and development in students' comunicative ability reflected in their dialogue journal writing.

In my study of the dialogue journals of 18 university-level Japanese students of ESL, I am documenting just such development. Using communicative competence theory as my framework, I am examining two interrelated aspects of what I define as communicative competence in dialogue journal writing: a writer's manipulation of topic and topic elaboration.

I base my definition of communicative competence in dialogue journal writing on the discussion of fluency by Fillmore (1979), which I reviewed in a previous newsletter (Gutstein, 1983). Communicative competence in dialogue journal writing is a composite of abilities having at least four components, following Fillmore's criteria. These are: the ability to write fluidly and easily; the ability to write coherently and meaningfully; the ability to write purposively; and the ability to use language creatively, to joke or play with language.

While communicative competence is an elusive phenomenon in any context, some of its attributes can be linked to measurable characteristics in dialogue journal writing. One such attribute, the purposive use of language, can be further defined as the ability to use language appropriately in a wide range of contexts. This functional use of language includes the ability to inform, apologize, thank, etc. (Shuy, 1982). It also includes a content-related parameter, which is the ability to know what to say; i.e., what topics are appropriate, how to initiate them into the discourse, and under what circumstances to continue or pursue them. A discourse progresses, halts or

(Continued on p. 8)

(Continued from p. 7)

stumbles based on how its interlocutors manage its topics--what topics are brought up, what is said about them, how much is said about them, and for how long.

Following and expanding upon methodologies used by Staton and Kreeft (1982), and by Keenan and Schieffelin (1976), I am conducting an analysis of discourse topic in the dialogue journals of my students. I am examining four aspects of topic treatment: topic initiation--which writer introduces topics and how often; topic continuation--which of the topics are continued and for how many turns; what I am calling topic domain--the content areas into which the topics fall; and topic-specific elaboration --the amount of new information provided about a given topic.

I am analyzing the results for patterns of topic treatment to see what they reveal about differences in communicative ability among students. I will also determine what relationship, if any, exists between my measures of communicative competence and "traditional" measures of student ability, beginning with a standardized English proficiency test and student grade point averages.

It is my hope that my research will serve to further document and substantiate what dialogue journal teachers have known all along: that writing dialogue journals helps to develop students' communicative ability. ●

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Staton, Jana and Joy Kreeft. 1982. Topics: what do they write about? In: Staton, Shuy, Kreeft and Reed. Op cit.

Dissertation Review

Robby Morroy. 1985. Teacher strategies: Linguistic devices for sustaining interaction in dialogue journal writing. Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University. (Will be available through University Microfilms.)

This study describes the strategies used by one teacher in dialogue journals with sixth-grade nonnative English speakers and measures their relative effectiveness to achieve her goal of increasing student communication. Although writing in dialogue journals is mandatory in this teacher's class (students are required to write three sentences a day), communication--i.e., writing a message that is meaningful to a reader--does not necessarily result. Simply getting students to write in their journals every day is definitely no guarantee that they will choose to communicate. The strategies that the teacher employs in the journals are therefore necessary tools for promoting communication.

The data for this study are the dialogue journals of ten sixth-grade students, all nonnative English speakers. Some had been in the U.S. for less than one year; others had spent at least five years in U.S. schools. The various strategies that the teacher used to promote communication were identified, and their effectiveness measured in terms of four characteristics of the students' writing: student response rate, degree of elaboration in student responses, syntactic complexity, and cohesiveness of responses. Most of the strategies were found to be variably effective by all four measures. Among the strategies found to be consistently effective across all students and across the three time periods sampled were: acknowledging and restating the student's topic, giving information, requesting information, expressing solidarity, suggesting, noticing something about the student, and asking for an opinion.

Many other strategies were also very effective for some students or at one period of the year, and not others. Morroy's findings stress that the essential value of the dialogue journal is its inherent variability and adaptability of teachers' responses to individual students' needs. ●

Recent Dialogue Journal Publications

Curtis, W. Hayes and Robert Bahruth. 1985. Querer es poder. In Hansen, Newkirk and Graves, eds. *Breaking Ground: Teachers Relate Reading and Writing in the Elementary School.* Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Debra Popkin. 1985. Dialogue journals: A way to personalize communication in a foreign language. *Foreign Language Annals.* (18), 2. 153-156.

Jana Staton. The power of responding by using dialogue journals. In Toby Fulwiler, ed. *The Journal Book.* Boynton/Cooke. Forthcoming.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Dialogue Journals in Nurses' Training

In your May 1985 issue of *Dialogue* [on DJs in higher education] you requested information about what your readers are doing with dialogue journals. As a Professor in Nursing Education at Howard Community College I was eager to incorporate journal writing into the Nursing Program. Nurse educators have typically documented observations regarding a student's behavior in the clinical area in the form of an anecdotal note. The vehicle of anecdotal notes was recently expanded to include the student's perceptions of a particular clinical day. Faculty then react to the student's reflective thoughts, and thus the previously one-way communication of an anecdotal record now comes close to a two-way dialogue journal.

We introduce the process with a written explanation, and encourage students to reflect on clinical experiences which were meaningful as well as to critique their own performance and share concerns and feelings of accomplishment. Although we impose some structure on what is to be written, the process meets the conditions for a dialogue journal in many ways. The exchange of journals occurs twice a week for several weeks, *with both parties providing and seeking* information and both parties equally engaged in the interaction. The student's communication often entails an indirect question which seeks to elicit faculty comment or feedback. Faculty are more likely to ask direct questions to stimulate a student to think critically or to clarify the communication.

In writing the explanation for the anecdotal/dialogue record, I was keenly aware of the dilemma of combining a dialogue journal format, which strives to promote understanding, with a record to communicate critical analysis of student behavior. However, I am convinced that we have achieved an effective mix. Students primarily describe clinical activities in which they are involved, and faculty react to the students' observed behavior and written descriptions, a legitimate exchange because students need to receive feedback on their performance. At the same time, the additional focus on perceptions and meaningful experiences assures that a nonjudgmental exchange is achieved.

-Emily Slunt, Professor of Nursing
Howard Community College, Columbia, MD

* * * *

In Elementary School

I teach fifth grade "core" (English and social studies) classes at the Berkeley-Carroll Street School in Brooklyn, N.Y. I have found that some of the best communication I have with my students is through their journals. Though this does not happen every time, by any means, the "intimate distance" which can be created in this form of communication is invaluable in opening people to each other and to themselves.

-Betsy Devlin-Foltz
Brooklyn, NY

* * * *

In Teaching Adult ESOL

The use of dialogue journals is now a recommended practice in the new study guide for teaching adult ESOL in the Montgomery County Public Schools:

There has been an increased awareness of the need for all ESOL students to write more effectively in their second language. With this in mind, dialogue journals are encouraged for upper beginning, intermediate, and advanced students. Entries are initiated by the student, minimal corrections are provided by the instructor, and an ongoing, spontaneous "dialogue" is sustained with the student throughout the course.

From *Study Guide for Teaching English to Adult Speakers of Other Languages,* Montgomery County Public Schools, Dept. of Adult Education, 1985.

(Continued from p. 9)

With Autistic and Learning-Disabled Students

Terry Shepherd, associate professor in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Media, Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, has an autistic son, Mark, who is now 19. For years he and his wife have corresponded daily with the teachers and aides at Mark's school. Mark carries a note each morning from his parents telling about activities of the evening before, for use in oral language lessons, writing, reading, etc. In the afternoon the teacher or aide writes a note back, telling of past and future school events so the parents may discuss them with Mark and assure that the information is being correctly processed. In the past few years, Mark has been opening the letters on his way to or from school, and has been able to write his own "experience stories" about home or school events, thus participating in the dialogue.

Dr. Shepherd has observed that writing has been an essential part of Mark's oral language development. Mark's first really spontaneous, self-generated comment at age eight (for years Mark only echoed what others said, one symptom of autism) came after a fuss with his sister. He retreated to the family room and wrote on the chalkboard there:

IATEDADDYSCRTSANDSUSANPUNCHEDMEINTHESTOMAK
("I ate Daddy's Certs and Susan punched me in the stomach")

Then he came upstairs and said it. It was as if the writing "released" the language so Mark could say it! Even recently, Dr. Shepherd observed Mark writing something in church. Mark didn't show him the writing, but casual glances at it allowed him to decipher: "I was good and I didn't make noises or stick out my tongue on the day before I went to my first computer lesson." Again, this writing seemed to be a rehearsal for speaking.

Writing notes to each other is now an essential part of life in the Shepherd household. At one point in Mark's life it was impossible for him to grasp an idea (like when his next haircut was) when only presented orally; it *had* to be written. Then he could process and remember the information.

Excerpted from: T.R. Shepherd, "Using experience language to teach an autistic-like child with a visual disorder to read (and write and talk). Sept., 1984. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 243 289; and a recent letter from Dr. Shepherd. •

Jack Farley recently completed his dissertation (Univ. of Cincinnati), a topic analysis of the DJs he kept with his class of mentally retarded adults (the abstract is in the *Back Issues* volume). Jack is now at Murray State University, and analyzing the DJ writing of multiply impaired (hearing impairedcerebral palsied-mentally retarded) students. He writes:

I find that for students who have a hearing impairment (which affects oral language development) and cerebral palsey (which affects both oral musculature and manual production), dialogue journals may be used as an augumentative communication system. Although these students may not be able to produce completely legible written language, their written efforts may augment their limited sign productions and unintelligible speech.

I am also keeping DJs with preservice teachers who will be working with handicapped students in mainstream settings. I advocate that regular educators maintain dialogue journals with their mainstreamed handicapped students to keep the lines of communication open.

-Jack W. Farley, Murray State Univ.

* * * *

Dialogue Journals at Home

This comes from Terry Shepherd again--concerning parents writing dialogues with their children about events, desires, "troubled waters," etc.

DASU (*DA*ddy and *SU*san) was born in 1979. My daughter Susan and I developed a neat written communication folder during the time of my father's hospitalization and subsequent death. This was a time when I was away from home visiting my parents, over a hundred miles away. DASU was our way of maintaining communication in absentia. It was written in and left where the writer next expected the reader to be (at the reader's spot at the breakfast table or on his/her pillow, for example). It was special because of the stress and emotion and need of the hour. Since that time, we have pretty much continued this writing, now in the form of letters. Susan now has a homemade mailbox by her door. She usually

(Continued on p. 11)

(Continued from p. 10)

leaves my letters on my dresser top near my glasses.

Excerpted from: T.R. Shepherd, "Using experience language with atypical learners." Presented at the National Reading and Language Arts Educators' Conference, Sept., 1985; and from a recent letter from Dr. Shepherd.

* * * *

Taking the "Bite" out of Blue Books

Trudith Smoke, ESL coordinator for the Department of Academic Skills at Hunter College in New York City, started using "blue books" (you know them--those little exam booklets) as dialogue journals with her students, because they were so easy to carry. She found that after using the blue books for dialogue journal writing, students are now not intimidated by them when they do use them to write exams.

* * * *

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

Teaching EFL in Japan

I'm just beginning to try out dialogue journals with my students. They're blue collar workers, and they were, by necessity, "failures" in the Japanese academic system. They are also in general very bright and enthusiastic. Their first entries in our journals were pretty difficult to understand, but now that I've gotten across the idea that this is supposed to be a dialogue (and that they should therefore read my responses), we are holding conversations. They really have trouble following what I write, but they ask each other for help a lot, and ask me to explain occasionally. It is fun watching them try out the grammatical structures they are learning, sometimes appropriately, so that the journals really become a balance for the "learning" part of the lesson. Last night was pretty wild with everyone consulting everyone else or me, and also sharing the replies they had received. I have to be more careful about my (illegible) handwriting.

-Madeline Adkins,
National Language Laboratory School
Hyogo-ken, Japan

* * * *

Teaching Deaf High School Students in Australia

We are nearing the end of our school year, and I'm seeing the benefits now of using journals with my students. I often wonder if the time I spend on journals could be better spent on preparing lessons but at the same time I enjoy the relationship that builds up over the year. I've decided I'll write journals again with my students next year. I look forward to receiving your next issue of "Dialogue."

-Elizabeth Turner
South Australia

* * * *

Research Note

Mary Maguire, associate professor at McGill University, has just received a research grant to study dialogue journal writing in a first grade classroom in Montreal, Quebec. The children in the study are learning English and French as second and third languages, and their written products will be analyzed.

YOU KNOW WHAT YOU SHOULD DO?
YOU SHOULD WRITE A STORY THAT WOULD EXCITE THE READER AS THE PLOT THICKENS...
IN ALL THE YEARS I'VE BEEN WRITING, I'VE NEVER HAD A PLOT THICKEN!

NEXT ISSUE: Dialogue Journals for Developing Literacy in Refugee, Migrant, and Adult Basic Education

Dialogue journals have proved effective beyond our expectations for promoting literacy development, and are adaptable to many different situations where students are in the process of acquiring literacy in English. Our summer issue will feature an article by Curtis *Hayes*, *Carolyn Kessler (U. of Texas at San Antonio)*, and Robert Bahruth (fifth grade teacher), who describe how a class of fifth grade migrant children grow from displaying little or no writing ability to being prolific readers and writers. Another article will report on work with adult basic education students at the Refugee Education and Employment Program in Arlington, VA. We also hope to have articles discussing literacy work in the refugee camps in the Philippines and Thailand. In addition, Carol Urzua, a featured speaker at TESOL '86, will discuss the ways that children learning ESL understand audience, ing, and this year's TESOL presentations and dialogue journal writing will be reviewed. WATCH FOR THE SUMMER ISSUE!

Future Issues:
- Focus on the Teacher: Benefits, Strategies, Problems, Etc.
- Dialogue Journal Communication for Personal Growth--focusing on aspects of student self-concept, attitudes, and cultural values

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DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of a National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyze the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 - 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

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Dialogue

September, 1986

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
Shelley Gutstein

DIALOGUE JOURNALS FOR DEVELOPING LITERACY IN REFUGEE, MIGRANT, AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Possibly the most important factors influencing literacy development, apart from a general orientation to print and mastery of basic literacy skills of letter and word formation and recognition, are the student's sense of ownership of the reading/writing experience--the feeling that reading and writing are a vital, meaningful part of one's life and a valuable way of expressing oneself --and sense of cooperation--the knowledge that one is not left alone in the endeavor, but communicating with someone who wants to communicate with them. In our society, lack of literacy skills is not simply a matter of lack of schooling or mastery of basic skills. In fact many semi-literates in the United States have said in interviews that they attended school through high school, but they never felt that reading and writing had anything to do with them and their interests and concerns. They felt as if they were on the outside looking in on an experience that must be relevant for others, but not for them; they never claimed reading and writing as part of their lives. When the language used for reading and writing is not the native language of the learner, the feeling of separation and eventual frustration is compounded.

The articles in this issue give us a broad view of different situations in which dialogue journals are being used with non-native English speakers to build a sense of ownership and cooperation and to provide an entree into the world of literacy. In Carole Urzúa's article, which opens this issue, we see young students realize that "someone is out there," as they develop a knowledge of audience and a sense of cooperating with an audience in written dialogue. Larry, a child of migrant workers who has had little exposure to English or print (Hayes, Bahruth & Kessler), seems to burst forth from a very well-established cocoon of non-writing when he finally takes ownership of his reading and writing, realizing that he can write and likes to.

In a program for semi-literate adults at the Spanish Education Development Center (Hester), students are involved in a variety of highly structured, teacher-guided writing activities to develop basic literacy skills. For them, the dialogue journal provides the one place where they can break away from these prescribed patterns and create something themselves in writing. Leslee Reed also describes how interactive writing with the teacher can help students to break away from frozen language patterns into more creative language use. In a Cultural Orientation class for adults in a refugee camp in Thailand (Johnson) written dialogue with their American teacher enables students to work with her to begin to make sense of how they might integrate their past traditions and customs into the new life they face in the United States.

In each situation, we see students who are at some stage in the development of basic literacy skills, but in each we see also the crucial role that ownership and cooperation play in the overall development of literacy.●

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"How is your weekend what did you do": Second Language Learners' Understanding of Audience

- Carole Urzúa, University of the Pacific

According to Graves, the question of "Why write?" begins to arise when children have been actively writing for two or three years, "when writers first gain a sense of audience" (1983:268). But what about children learning English as a second language? Do they also begin to sense the demands of an audience when they have been learning literacy for this length of time? In what ways do they understand how audiences can work for them?

I recently became acquainted with four Southeast Asian children to search out answers to these questions; two were fourth grade Cambodian girls and two were sixth grade boys, one Cambodian and one Laotian. They had all been in the United States about two years; none of the children had had previous literacy experience in their native language.

The children engaged in weekly writing workshops, helping one another through peer interaction to communicate their intended messages. In addition, they wrote dialogue journals with my colleage, Sue Braithwaite, an ESL supervisor, sending them twice a week through the district mail.

One of the most dramatic areas of growth for the children in the writing workshops was their awareness of revision needs, largely because they trusted that their friends truly wanted to know what they knew. (See Urzúa, 1985, for an extended discussion.) Also, while not engaging in revision in their dialogue journals, the children nevertheless demonstrated that they had begun to care about their audience. In various ways, they acknowledged 1) that some-one else was interested in what they knew; 2) that they were interested in what someone else knew; and 3) that they were interacting with a specific person.

Acknowledgement of others' interest. The children had varying strategies for acknowledging that someone else was interested in what they knew. It took Vuong, one of the boys, the longest to indicate that he was aware of the conversational tone of the journals. For almost two months, he wrote about his weekend: he got up, washed his face, did the laundry, occasionally watched football, and went to bed! Taking cues from his initiations, Sue plied him with questions such as what his favorite football team was. But Vuong never varied from his format. Finally in frustration, Sue asked him about his expertise in learning to play the violin. What was his favorite piece? In the first entry which acknowledged the presence of an interactant, Vuong answered that his favorite piece was Lightly Row. This breakthrough occurred about the same time as a major revision in another piece of writing; until this time, Vuong's revision strategy had been to make his piece look prettier, laboriously copying the same words, one word at a time, onto a new page. Clearly, he had begun to take his reader into account.

The other children had other strategies for acknowledging this audience interest. One of the girls would answer any questions posed by Sue on the same line; the other girl would take the questions and compose a paragraph, consisting solely of answers!

Acknowledgement of their interest in others. Some of the children were well aware of the interactive nature of the journals; one of the children asked, perhaps rhetorically, "Now what should we talk about?," and then nominated his own topic, skiing. But again it was Vuong who took the longest to indicate that he was interested in his audience. A week after he answered the questions about the violin piece, Vuong initiated the topic of going fishing, which was extended over three entries. In the third entry, he discussed catching fish on the coast, and then ended, "How is your weekend what did you do." The first tentative question! Still no question mark, but obvious interest in his partner. In the subsequent weeks, he continued to pose this same question; he never asked about anything else. Sue continued to fill him in on her family's weekend activities.

Acknowledgement of interacting with a specific person. As with children writing in their first language, our children became close to Sue, and discussed many personal issues. One of the girls, for example, nearly always wrote letters beginning, "Dear Mrs. Braithwaite." In one particularly poignant entry, she revealed the extent to which she recognized that she was writing not just to any audience, but to a trusted friend.

Dear Mrs. Braithwaite,
Can I ask you a question?
I feel sad because everytimes
you mailed my journal back I
always saw a different folders.

(Continued on p. 3)

(Continued from p. 2)

> *When I took that folder home I always saw it riped. Why are you always changed those folders? Well, I don't mean that I don't like that folder. Everytimes those folder on my desk, everyone start teasing me. I always turned red, you know that I'm the shyest girl. They always said "what a beautiful," but it's mean a opposite word. Well see you on Thursday.*

The sensitive "audience" bought new folders for all the writers!

With these data from only four ESL children, it is not possible to say whether Graves' timeline for native language writers is the same as that for second language learners. However, it is evident that second language children can participate in the same powerful use of language as other children, and that they do come to recognize the importance of their readers. Dialogue journals are one of the ways in which this is facilitated. ●

Reference

Urzúa, C. "You stopped too soon": Composing in young L2 learners. Paper presented at the annual meeting of TESOL, New York, 1985.

Recent Dialogue Journal Publications

Johnson, Kirsten. 1986. Using dialogue journals for a more meaningful cultural orientation class. Passage: A Journal of Refugee Education. Vol. 2, No. 2. Summer 1986. Pp. 67-70.

Sayers, Dennis. 1986. Sending messages: across the classroom and around the world. TESOL Newsletter. Supplement on computer-assisted language learning. Vol. 20. No. 1. Pp. 7 and 8.

Sayers, Dennis. 1986. Dialogue journals: A literary "close encounter" of the first kind. Correspondent. Vol. 2. No. 2. Pp. 4 and 5. New England Bilingual Education Multifunctional Support Center.

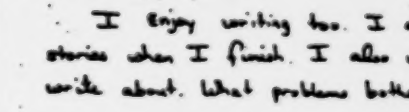
The Dialogue Journal and Migrant Education

- Curtis W. Hayes, Robert Bahruth, & Carolyn Kessler
Universities of Texas at San Antonio and Austin

Larry Reyes entered the fifth grade in August 1983, already branded a failure. Larry, son of migrant farm workers, unable to read materials at his own grade level, unable to write, was typical of his classmates. All were Spanish language dominant; all were limited in English proficiency (LEP); and all, unless a turnaround occurred, would continue to fail in school, and failure would quite likely lead, if history is a guide, to their dropping out of school, most by the seventh grade. Some would remain until the 9th or 10th grade before leaving to work in the fields for low wages, accompanying their parents from one region to another, from one maturing crop to the next. Very few would stay to graduate from high school.

In August, charged with the education of twenty-two children, all reading below grade norms (among whom was Larry) and some unable to read at all, we began. We began during those warm days of August by asking the children to write to us and we would respond--write about anything, we said, and don't worry about spelling or punctuation, we added. Just write, but write at least three lines about a topic you're interested in. That is how we initiated the dialogue journal for a group of LEP students who were experiencing extreme difficulties in reading and writing English.

Most children responded, some reluctantly, and the next day turned in three lines--all except Larry, who submitted a blank sheet. Robert, his teacher, responded in the journal by asking, "How can I answer you if you don't write to me?" The next day, Larry wrote (all journal entries are unedited for spelling and punctuation): "I like math because I can count by five and tens. I like to write about Bo & Be & I like to draw the pictures & write the...." His words then trailed off, reflecting the years that Larry had spent in school learning little of what it would take to succeed. But Robert responded:


I enjoy writing too. I also enjoy illustrating my
stories when I finish. I also use pictures for ideas to
write about. What problems bother you about writing?

(Continued on p. 4)

(Continued from p. 3)

Larry candidly answered:

Well I can't not spell right. That what's bother me about writing.

After that first week, those initial, halting days, Larry was off. His entries lengthened, and his topics included: what he had been reading, his dislikes and likes, football games he attended and sandlot games he participated in, games he played ("mardles"), poems he particularly liked, his best friends and their activities together, arranging games with his teacher (a football game on Sunday). He even began to pose questions--"have you play football wind you were little with anther kids?"--and answer questions from his teacher: "Would you like to learn to play chess?" Larry responded:

> *I taught that chess was lik checkers. But I no how to play checkers a lot. Have you play checkers & chinese checkers?*

Larry periodically returned to his favorite topic, the one he knew most about: "I went to the football field the Sunday that pass."

Eventually, as he became more comfortable, confident and secure with his writing, he began to write about his future:

> *I'm saying to my mom that I'm going to finish school and I am golling to college and study for a year and try for teacher because I like being a teacher.*

We also required our children to make covers for their journals. This is Larry's first cover.

Once he had filled the pages of his first journal, Larry asked whether he could begin another: "I like to make another Journal but this time I will make the cover of the Journal pretty not like this Journal." He then added, "do you remeber the frist day I didn't write guess like one line, I like writeing in my Journal." And the effect that writing to his teacher and receiving responses had on Larry is seen on his elaborate second cover.

The children wrote and read extensively throughout that year. By May, when they were already leaving for the fields, they had "published" twenty-two books consisting of their writings (Hayes and Bahruth 1985), in addition to writing daily in their journals.

In August we had pre-tested our children, in January we again assessed, and in May we post-tested. Growth in reading comprehension as indicated on the standardized assessment instrument employed by the school district revealed an average gain per child of three years. Those who were not reading or writing at all in August were now participants in May--they could read and write.

The key to any success we had, of course, is no secret. We began with the dialogue journal (DJ), which we refer to now as our "catalytic converter." It converted our children into writers and readers. We believe it led to writing for a number of reasons: it was not graded; there were no right or wrong answers so there was no risk; it was private and consisted of a friendly conversation between two people genuinely interested in one another; there was no fear of ridicule; and it was fun. All of us looked forward with anticipation to see what the other had written. Additionally, the DJ consisted of child-initiated topics. Children could ask for and receive clarification on class assignments. Children could ask for additional examples (i.e., math problems). Most

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important, the DJ provided daily feedback in language that children could understand, and a daily reading lesson. And the kind of expressive writing that our children did quite naturally led to the kinds of transactional writing activities that are so important for school success, the writing that is done in the content or academic areas.

From this one classroom filled with Larrys, we have this past year introduced the dialogue journal in a school whose students do not fare well in the reading and writing tasks assigned by the teacher. Eighty-five percent of the children in grades K-5 in this school are second language learners of English, all LEP. We have found that these children, once they discover they will not be "hammered" (a word employed by one student) for any infelicitous sentence or phrase, for misspelled words or inappropriate punctuation, will not only write but they will enjoy writing and they will improve in their use of the written language, both in terms of content and of form. We who direct and teach in the TESL preparation program for teachers and prospective teachers of LEP students recommend highly to our own students that they consider the benefits of using the DJ in their own language arts program. We employ a DJ with them, and we demonstrate by our use that we value writing in our own lives. •

Reference

Hayes, Curtis W. and Robert Bahruth. 1985. Querer es poder. In Breaking Ground, Jane Hansen, Thomas Newkirk, and Donald Graves (Eds.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 98-107.

IN PRESS IN PRESS IN PRESS

Dialogue Journal Communication: Classroom, Linguistic, Social, and Cognitive Views, Jana Staton, Roger Shuy, Joy Kreeft Peyton, and Leslee Reed, is now at ABLEX, to appear in Marcia Farr's Writing Research Series. This is a much improved version of the first NIE report (Staton, et al, 1982), with readable charts and lots of examples.

We expect it to come out the end of 1986, and hope to make a prepublication offer to our newsletter subscribers, which should whittle the cost down somewhat. You may want to write for the brochure describing this book and the entire Writing Research Series.

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Features of Semi-literate Writing: One Student's Development

Julietta Hester,
Spanish Education Development Center

At the Spanish Education Development (SED) Center in Washington, DC, where I am an ESL instructor in the Adult Education Program, around 40% of our students are semi-literate; that is, they know that letters and words on paper have meaning, although they may not always be able to decipher them. Half of the ESL students have had less than six years of formal schooling in their home countries. Their literacy level in Spanish is often low, resulting in reading and writing difficulties in English.

In working on writing with these students, we give them controlled activities to develop their letter and word formation, which they haven't always mastered, as well as opportunities to express themselves fluently in writing in more extended text. Moving along a continuum from controlled to free-writing activities, we work on four types of writing: discrete item activities, controlled compositions, paragraphs, and dialogue journals.

Students do discrete-item activities such as punctuation and spelling exercises and writing letters in print and cursive form to become aware of new writing features, practice them, and add them to their repertoire of writing skills. In controlled compositions, which consist of following a model and altering parts of it, they work on these same skills in the context of longer text. Paragraph writing is an opportunity for students to use what they have learned in semi-controlled writing to express ideas of their own. Finally, dialogue journals are the freest type of writing that students do, because neither the topic nor structure is controlled. A student may choose to write about any subject and in any form in the dialogue journals. It is our belief that utilizing these four types of writing in the classroom will provide a bridge from learned items to free expression in writing.

Curious about changes that might occur over time in students' free-writing, I decided to study the dialogue journals of Maruja Bacilio, a student from Peru who has been studying at SED Center for over a year. Looking through early entries, I noticed four

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features that were prominent in the beginning stages of her dialogue journal writing, features which are easily quantifiable and are common to our students with formal education deficits:

1. "Pause points." These are small dots that appear between words and in the middle of a line when students rest their pencils after laboriously writing a word. They are steps in the evolution of punctuation, often appearing where commas or other internal punctuation will be in later writing.

2. Interchanged capital and small letters. Capital and small letters are interspersed throughout sentences and even within individual words. These errors are among a series of changes that take place in the writing of semi-literate students on the letter level.

3. Use of both printing and cursive writing. Printing and cursive writing are used interchangeably within a sentence and within a word. Errors of this kind are among many changes that occur over time on the word level.

4. Unnecessary connection or division of words. Individual words are connected or one word is divided into parts. These developmental errors occur along a continuum of changes that take place over time on the word level. For example, beginning nonliterate students often copy words in a single line without any spaces between words. Over time they begin to write words with some spaces in between, and finally, a space between every word.

I followed these features in Maruja's dialogue journal entries rather than in her other writing because this was where she writes regularly and spontaneously, without as much self- or teacher monitoring or correction as in her other writing, providing an indication of development in the freest written context. I compared Maruja's first six consecutive dialogue journal entries from July 1 to August 19, 1985 with her last six consecutive entries from March 20 to April 10, 1986, concentrating on patterns of development in these four areas. I found a remarkable reduction in pause points between the two sets of entries, with 21 out of 328 words in the early set and only eight out of 440 words in the later one. Even though Maruja wrote more in the later sample, she produced only around one-third as many pause points.

Use of capital and small letters also evolved from the first set of entries to the second. While the first set contained 95 examples of incorrectly placed capitals or small letters in the sample of 328 words, the second set contained only half as many errors of this kind--50 in the 440-word sample. Maruja's writing had changed from a jumble of letter types with capital letters in any position in the word, to words made up mostly of small letters placed where they belonged. In the beginning, she always wrote "F" and "K" and usually wrote "T" as capitals. By the last entry the correct use of capital and small forms of these letters had fully developed.

Similar changes took place in Maruja's printing and cursive writing. Oddly enough, she began by using predominantly cursive writing, but, instead of connecting these letters, she left spaces between them in a word, and interspersed a few printed letters throughout. Her last entry was primarily printed, with a few cursive letters sprinkled in. She was experimenting with these two aspects of her writing and opted for printing. Changes back and forth from cursive to printing both on the word and sentence level were still evident in her last entry, but were much less frequent.

The last feature that I examined was the connection of two words into one or the separation of a single word into two. Although this is a typical feature of many of our students' initial writing, few examples occurred in Maruja's journal entries. She separated "same times" (sometimes) and united "ofcurse" (of course) in the first set of entries, and I found very little change in this feature over time, with only scattered examples in the second set.

The four features that I followed in this one student's writing seem to represent points along a continuum of developmental progress in writing. Pause points may be illustrative of punctuation development. The

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interchange of capital and small letters, and the mixing of cursive and printed writing, may represent a stage in the development of letter formation. The inappropriate connection and division of words may represent evolution on a word level. Other features, representative of development of writing on a sentence and discourse level, could also be identified and followed. Those I chose to look at offer educators an easy way to observe the evolution of student writing in dialogue journals.

It is unclear whether all the differences I found in Maruja's writing were due to the many opportunities she had to experiment with writing afforded by the journal, to her examination of her teacher's entries to her, to other class activities, or to a combination of factors.

However, teachers considering using dialogue journals in a adult literacy program may find the results of this effort encouraging. At a minimum, dialogue journal writing appears to provide a context for use of features learned and practiced in more controlled writing exercises. It may also provide a place to acquire new features in an enjoyable and free-writing context.

[The SED Center is a nonprofit, community-based educational organization offering low-cost services to the residents of the predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods of Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, and Mount Pleasant.] o

Research Report

Jacqui Whisler's master's thesis, "A Dialogue Journal as a Means to Encouraging a Bilingual Student to Write Cohesively" (University of Texas at Arlington, May, 1986), is particularly relevant to the theme of this issue. She compares the dialogue journal writing of one fifth grade student, "Juan," a native Spanish speaker, with his in-class essays, focusing on cohesion. She discusses the role of the dialogue journal in developing use of cohesive devices and audience awareness and in improving Juan's attitude toward writing. She shows that the dialogue journal served as a very important entree to literacy for this student and an important source of information for his teachers about what he was actually able to do in writing. The dialogue journal allowed him an opportunity to write (whereas much of his in-class "writing" involved work sheets and brief exercises), and in it he was able to express himself much more effectively than he could, at that point, in his in-class essays. ●

Using Dialogue Journals for a More Meaningful Cultural Orientation Class

- Kirsten Johnson, Phanat Nikhom Refugee Camp, Thailand

My coordinator had called the class I was about to teach a "dream class." But when I faced those 28 Laotians on the first day, I had my doubts. I had never taught such a high level before, nor such a large and varied class. This was a cultural orientation (CO) class, and in the 15 weeks before my students left for the U.S., I was expected to communicate a myriad of cultural issues to them. I had some ideas about how to teach these students, how to guide them to teach themselves, and how to assess what they had learned. But how was I to gain insight into their personal thoughts, address individual needs and problems, and encourage them to be open with me? Many of their true feelings would never surface in such a large group. I had to find a way in which they could. I had heard of other classes using dialogue journals and decided to experiment with the technique myself, adapting it to fit my students' needs and my own goals.

When I first introduced the idea of keeping a dialogue journal, my students were somewhat confused. Even though I gave them a long list of ways to communicate--asking questions, making comments on CO lessons, practicing grammar points, writing creatively, or just spilling out anything that was on their minds--they were unsure of what I wanted, having been used to a much more structured educational system in which teachers' expectations were more clearly defined. Finally, I told them that I thought it was important for them to improve their English, whereupon they fell to work. Of course, I wanted to go far beyond improving their writing skills, but my real motives were so vague and complex that I didn't want to burden my students by trying to explain them. Throughout the cycle, I let them discern for themselves what my motives were by what I encouraged them to write about and how I responded to what they had written.

Though my students were free to write what they liked in their journals, many times I gave them structured ideas to focus their attention. I would ask them to relate their writing to what we had been studying in CO class, either through direct commentary, or by answering an open-ended question. Through

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our class discussions and activities, I was able to assess their knowledge of and attitudes toward these issues only to a limited extent and hoped we could explore them further in the journals. I also took particular interest in whether or not the students had other concerns which they might have been too inhibited to express openly. From their journal responses, I would structure in-class activities that would focus on those concerns.

Many of the students voiced fears in their journal entries about losing their traditional culture as they became immersed in a new one. So, in class we discussed the concepts of tradition, civilization, and westernization and how a group of people could be influenced by these. Through our discussion, my students were able to see that one can, in fact, keep one's past alive, and that it is not wrong to merge both cultures. I was glad that I had read their journal entries before the discussion, so that I could refer directly to their concerns. Furthermore, the discussion made more sense to the students than if I had just come in fresh one day with questions about changing traditional culture; our discussion was given another dimension because the students had had an opportunity to think and write about the topic first.

Sometimes the students asked questions about what would be required of them in their new home. Some were simple and straightforward: "Does every person in the U.S. go to the university?" Most, however, were more complex and it took a lot of time and consideration to form a response: "Do the American girls need to get married with Hmong? Or another refugee?" When I responded, I made it clear to the student that I could only write from my own experience or bias; another person might answer very differently. Often the students would make statements such as: "All Americans respect honesty, isn't that right?" Then we had to discuss the issue so they could get a more realistic view. I hoped they realized by the end that there are very few questions that can be answered in a cut-and-dried manner; to generalize and stereotype makes things appear deceptively simple. By the time the cycle was over, I think most of them had realized that in order to learn the truth of any matter, one must explore further.

Because of the Asian tradition of retaining a certain formal distance between teacher and student, I thought when I first began to work with my students that I should not allow myself to get too close. Easy familiarity might dissolve the respect we felt for each other. Still, teachers are human beings and feel a kind of kinship with their students. The teacher cannot show this feeling in an overt way; it must be expressed in subtle ways. I found the journals a good way of building personal relationships with my students. Without having to embarrass ourselves in any way, we could carry on a special relationship through the written word. This did not lessen the respect between us; rather, it heightened it. Because of this bond, my students were more willing to listen to me and give of themselves in the class, and I was more genuinely willing to put as much effort as I could into making it the best CO class that it could be. •

[This article is excerpted from an article of the same title in Passage, a journal of refugee education, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer, 1986).]

The Dialog Maker, El Dialoquista, and Le Dialoquiste

...are interactive word processors that help a teacher create her half of a written conversation--in English, French or Spanish--with many students. Whenever we engage in face-to-face conversation, we signal turn-taking in many ways, but most often by saying something and waiting for a response. With the Dialog Maker, you can write to students and the software will leave "pauses" where they can respond later. Before class, a teacher uses the computer disk to write a string of both GENERAL and PERSONAL messages. Later, one at a time, students "hold up their end of the conversation" on the computer. As soon as a student reacts to the teacher's sequence of messages, the computer prints out a playscript--with the teacher and that student as the principal actors.

Bilingual English-Spanish and English-French versions for Apple II computers, with a User's Guide about the program and dialogue journal writing in general, are available from InterLearn for $49.95 at Box 342, Cardiff-by-the-Sea, CA 92007. Look for an article on these programs in the next issue of Dialogue.

Moving Students from Frozen to More Creative Language Use

- Leslee Reed

In learning a foreign language, familiar language patterns can be vital. Our ESL students often find language patterns helpful early in their learning, because they allow them to produce language with a sense of accomplishment and the secure feeling that they are speaking correctly, feelings so important when one is trying to become proficient in another language.

In reading the dialogue journals of my beginning ESL students, I often see evidence of the reliance on familiar language patterns, which may take several forms. Some students begin with the basic, "What's your name?" and "My name is Mary." From this they may move on to the use of "I like..." patterns--"I like to play ball," "I like you," etc. With beginning students, I accept this as an early stage of their development, and in my responses I attempt to build on the language that is there.

Unfortunately, students can "stall out" on a pattern, and it can become a crutch. Because they are not proficient in English, they may have remained in ESL classes as they moved from one grade to another, where they have been taught and retaught certain fixed phrases and sentences until they are reinforced and almost automatic. They reach a level of certainty with parts of the language that they know, and do not progress beyond that. For example, one student of mine who truly loved writing in his journal would write about some topic and then write the pattern, "I like.... "Do you like...?" If he told me about a game he had played, he ended with, "I liked the game. Do you like the game?" Each day was the same with him, telling me whatever it was he had on his mind and then using the same pattern. For this student, the pattern was very functional--a safe way to end one topic and keep writing until he thought of another topic.

The use of patterns by this student has caused me to rethink my original negative reaction toward the use of patterns and to see that they can be functional at certain steps in literacy development. However, students do need to move out of using fixed language patterns to more creative language use, and I believe that a teacher using dialogue journals can assist in that development. This can be done in several ways--by varying the pattern, by adding details to the original pattern, by changing the order of the patterns, or by introducing new patterns related to new topics--all ways of supplementing or breaking the pattern. When the student writes something like, "I like the game," the teacher might add a detail about the game: "I can see you like the handball game." Time or location could be added: "Yes, you like the game we play at recess" or "You like the game we play with the other class." Revising the statement can also help to change the pattern while using the same, familiar vocabulary: "The handball game is the one you like." With more advanced students, asking "Why?" can encourage them to elaborate and use more creative language; giving them a choice can make understanding and responding simpler: "Why did you like the book? Was it funny? Was it sad?"

Sometimes the teacher may simply want to respond to the student's topic, but use very little of the student's language, as in this response to one of my students:

Student: *Today I play ball. Tomorrow I play ball. The next day I play ball.*

Teacher: *Play ball in area 17. Play with the boys and girls of our Room 11.*

Today you read about the days of the week.

Miss P__ will not be here this week.

With these beginning students, new elements added to the student's original pattern and new language that is introduced need to be added with meaning and in context, to aid in the student's comprehension.

Dialogue journals are an excellent place to guide students in subtle ways away from frozen, familiar language patterns and to move them along in their language development. Students have time to read, process, and question if they do not understand. They can review what they have read, which reinforces it and helps them to capture and retain new words and patterns. ●

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Dialogue journal and personal journal writing were well represented at the TESOL Convention in Anaheim, California, in March, with three different sessions.

1. "Perspectives on Journal Writing: Research and Practice"

This day-long colloquium consisted of six papers. Two were about personal journaling, an adaptation of Ira Progoff's Intensive Journal Process:

"A context for collaboration: Teachers and students writing together"
Donna Jurich, San Francisco State Univ.
Lauren Vanett, Alemany Community College

Discusses the way that writing and sharing journal entries along with students changes the teacher's role from simply teacher and evaluator to fellow writer, and also changes basic teacher perceptions about writing.

"The journal as genre"
Tamara Lucas, Stanford University

Discusses personal journal writing as a genre with its own set of conventions. In a class in which personal journal writing is central, students and teacher negotiate and begin to internalize these conventions over time, although they are never articulated as such at the beginning.

Four papers were about dialogue journal writing, with ESL elementary students:

"Dialogue journal writing and the acquisition of English grammatical morphology"
Joy Kreeft Peyton, Center for Applied Linguistics

Shows patterns of grammatical acquisition in the dialogue journal writing of sixth graders, beginning English learners. Although the journals were used strictly for communication with no focus on grammatical accuracy, students demonstrated increased accuracy in the use of certain grammatical forms over a year's time.

and with hearing-impaired students:

"Coherence in deaf students' writing"
John Albertini, National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Shows how students' dialogue journal writing can demonstrate their use of organization and cohesion in written text, and argues that such writing can foster language objectivity and metalinguistic awareness, as a teacher responds both to <u>what</u> a student has said and <u>how</u> it was said, in a conversational context.

"The dialogue journal and reconceived curriculum theory"
Bonnie Meath-Lang, National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Suggests that dialogue journal writing provides a basis for re-examining basic assumptions about the goals of education, the nature of student-teacher relationships, the purpose of writing, and judgments about what constitutes "good" writing.

"Dialogue journals and the interactive teaching of reading"
Margaret Walworth, Gallaudet College

In courses that involve extensive reading, dialogue journal writing provides a forum for determining what schemata students are bringing to the text, for bringing student perceptions more closely in line with the meaning of the text, and for modelling reading strategies and suggesting alternative strategies that students might use.

2. "Reading for Cultural Insights: The Use of the Dialog Journal in the L2 Classroom"
Margaret S. Steffensen, Illinois State University

Can the dialogue journal be used to teach ESL students about American culture and improve their reading and composition skills simultaneously? Steffensen investigates this question in

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an intermediate ESL course at ISU, using a regional novel as the basis for a semester-long dialog about the culture of the Midwest, where the students were studying. Ten undergraduates enrolled in an ESL composition course spent two hours a week reading William Maxwell's So Long, See You Tomorrow and writing about it in their journals. At the end of the week, the journals were collected and Steffensen and a teaching assistant responded to the entries. Later students read and dialogued about Robert B. Parker's Early Autumn, a detective story.

Responses took several different forms. Students' questions, which ranged from the literal to inferential, were answered, and any errors in interpretation of the text addressed. The instructors also asked questions that encouraged the students to compare motivations and actions in the novel to what would be normal and appropriate in their own cultures. By asking students to interpret the behavior of various characters on the basis of American norms, they probed deeper levels of inferencing. Finally, they encouraged students to evaluate characters and to respond affectively to them.

At the end of the semester, students completed a 21-item attitude scale. Their responses indicated that they felt they had gained a number of benefits from the course, including greater cultural insight and improved skill in reading, writing and studying. Responses also showed that they had enjoyed the course. While this method should be studied further, particularly to quantify the gains made in reading and composition, this is an interesting application of the dialog journal that others might want to explore.

3. "Using journals in ESL composition classes"
Margaret E. Graves, Iowa State University

We did not get an abstract of this presentation, but it was about dialogue journals. Write to Margaret Graves for details. ●

What about keeping a dialogue journal with someone we work with, who is trying to learn English? Rosemarie Hellman, a reading specialist for the Montgomery (Md) County Schools, found her best opportunity to try out the dialogue journal at home rather than at school, with the woman who helps her clean her house once a week. Since Rosemarie is gone most of the time, there is little opportunity for conversation. Those who believe that writing should not, indeed cannot, be acquired apart from acquiring the ability to write with "voice" and personal expression will find this dialogue proof indeed.

Rosemarie writes: "Connie has tried for U.S. citizenship, but has been unable to pass the written test. She works only as a housemaid, and has very little contact with English speakers. Here are the first entries of our dialogue journal; I wrote first after I explained it to her orally."

R: Friday, April 25, 1986

...I told you about how writing to me every week can help your ability to speak English. I would like to try the idea and see if it really works.

Every time you come on Thursday take a few minutes to read my note and write an answer. It is O.K. to ask questions or answer my questions. It is OK to write about what you did when you were little or about something that is important to you. Answer me right below this note and I will write back to you.

C: May 7, 1986

I wake at five oclock but get up at five thorty, I'm gon to bathroom to was may face, wish fres wather and soap, and cleaner may tes and comb may hair and makcap. Wend I look in the miroow a beautiful gairl!? I ask to Conni do you know that beatiful gairl.? I'm take may dres, I'm was go to the kichen and get may breakfast, put in may paket or may purses and get may keys, clos the aparement door, walk to car, and got to may work....

Connie's first entry certainly shows the unfortunate influence of instruction in "how to write," but in the midst of the predictable narration of her day, there is a glimpse of the self ready to burst forth. Any dialogue journal that begins with this kind of open expression, and has a willing listener like Rosemarie as an audience, will not only increase the writer's fluency and coherence but can lead to the kind of competence in using written language as a reflection of ourselves that we all hope for. ●

NEXT ISSUES

* Focus on the Teacher -- Vol. III.4 Winter, 1986

  Benefits
  Problems
  Research Issues

* Classroom Management, Student Attitudes, Behavior, and Self-Concept -- Vol. IV.1 Spring, 1987

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DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), which is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CLEAR, write: Dialogue, CLEAR, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 - 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

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Dialogue

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
Shelley Gutstein

FOCUS ON THE TEACHER: BENEFITS, STRATEGIES, TIME

Most of the time we write or talk about dialogue journals only in terms of the benefits students receive. Are dialogue journal teachers by nature that unselfish? It may be time to tell others the truth: We use dialogue journals because they meet our own needs as teachers.

This issue turns to a focus on the teacher. In it, teachers reflect on the reasons why they use dialogue journals and address some of the issues of time and strategies for responding. Contributions from two elementary teachers, Leslee Reed and Mary Austin; two secondary teachers, Cyndy Shelton and Kathy Andersen-Smith; and a principal, Jan Mulvaney, on teacher benefits are complemented by research perspectives from Rob Tierney and Martha Dolly. For teachers who have become computer-dependent, Dennis Sayers describes software which allows a teacher to manage dialogue journals on a single file system.

Getting constant feedback on the effectiveness of teaching in terms of individual student needs is an essential part of staying alive as a teacher. I am convinced that most teacher anxiety and "burnout" come from not knowing if one has been effective or made a difference that day--and having to plan for the next day in spite of the uncertainty. Leslee Reed reminds us that in order to be motivated and open to learning, teachers also need immediate, meaningful feedback about their efforts. Knowing that you can reach each student every day, even the quiet ones, is another way in which a written dialogue reduces teacher anxiety, as both Cyndy Shelton and Kathy Andersen-Smith point out. We're particularly glad to have these two high school teachers discussing why dialogue journals are helpful to them.

Increasingly, methods of discipline place the teacher and student in an adversarial relationship, instead of participating in the shared construction of knowledge. Mary Austin's and Jan Mulvaney's articles suggest that dialogue journals can be a useful alternative to the realpolitik approach to classroom management, even with a very difficult class.

Perhaps the ultimate benefit of dialogue journals for teachers is authenticity. Maxine Greene, in Teacher As Stranger, points out that teachers are frequently addressed as if they "had no life of [their] own, no body and no inwardness...infinitely controlled, technically efficient, impervious to moods." What these articles stress is the opportunity for teachers to speak in their own voices, for self-definition for all the loose ends and doubts and questions which Greene defines as essential for a genuine learning encounter. In the research section, Rob Tierney gives a fascinating account of what happened when he deliberately varied the authenticity of his responses to student teachers, mixing in "glib" comments with personal and reflective ones.

What comes through in each of these articles is the deep satisfaction of teachers who are finding their own needs met in the very process of teaching itself because of dialogue journal use: getting feedback on the effectiveness of teaching, reaching the individual student, managing classes where discipline problems and aggressiveness threaten to eliminate teaching, and exploring their own infinite variety as a model for students to do the same. •

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Yes, Teacher, There Is Hope!

- Mary Austin, Bucknell Elem., Fairfax CPS

"Hope?" Last year, late in November, I was not so sure there was hope, as far as my sixth grade class was concerned.

As a newly hired teacher in Fairfax County, Virginia, I began the year with idealistic, hopeful thoughts and expectations concerning my new position. Surely this county, with its nationwide reputation for outstanding scholarship and exceptional professional working conditions, could have no extreme disciplinary and motivational problems among its students!

This illusion was short-lived. The promise of an outstanding curriculum and working conditions was more than fulfilled, but another kind of reality stomped and screamed through my door with the first bell at the beginning of the school term. The word was out: I was the new teacher and I had to be broken in right. From the very beginning, that was the only objective on which my class could agree.

The catastrophic and completely frustrating composition of this particular class became more painfully apparent to me with each passing day. Several of my students had very domineering, overbearing, even obnoxious personalities. When these students lost their tempers, the remaining students became inarticulate, voiceless, wild-eyed, frightened children. One especially disturbed student could disrupt my entire class for several days. By November, any communication with my class vanished and was replaced with fear and mistrust.

In a neighborhood elementary school such as mine, such students often "pile up" in one classroom--there just aren't enough classes to spread them around! A very supportive, genuinely caring staff, especially my principal and the counseling resource teacher, worked unceasingly with me to alleviate the problems. We held worthwhile conferences with parents and students, but progress was hard to detect. The atmosphere was definitely not conducive to learning, and even the casual observer felt the resentment and a lack of class cohesiveness. [See "A Principal's View of Dialogue Journals," by Jan Mulvaney, this issue.]

One morning, my principal called me into her office with yet another alternative--dialogue journals. She had just learned about their use as a means of personalized communication, and we both grasped this possible solution enthusiastically. At this point, we had simply exhausted so many other alternatives.

Frankly, as my principal (always hopeful by nature) explained this new tactic to me, I felt skepticism creeping in. I realized quickly that dialogue journals would require a total commitment and desire to succeed, and additional time and effort on my part. Would there be the benefits I needed? There seemed to be a glimmer of hope from reports about the effectiveness of dialogue journals for classroom management.

When I introduced dialogue journals to my less-than-receptive class, their first reaction was, "You've got to be kidding, lady!" Some of the more boisterous ones blatantly refused to write. I didn't force the issue. Over eighty per cent of my class wrote to me at the very first opportunity--and within a week or two, the more rebellious ones soon joined in, unwilling to be left out. Oppressed feelings had finally found an acceptable outlet. A few of the most quiet ones just couldn't seem to stop; I was amazed and overjoyed at their openness. I didn't attempt to counsel them, but I did listen and sympathize. The atmosphere in my classroom began to change.

After the novelty of the experience of daily journal writing began to wear off, our correspondence began to decline. A few students wrote the same meaningless message day after day. Responding to them became tedious after some time.

I had to search for new and interesting topics to discuss in my responses. I discovered that my students felt very special if I shared some small area of my personal life with them. Unimportant details about my life became meaningful and consequential if only one student knew about them. I became more personable to my class as a result of this kind of sharing, and we became friends.

Because of the dialogue journals, my quiet students could reveal their fears and resentment of other students. My angry, verbally abusive students could write about their anger rather than scream across the class. Students who were visibly disturbed by my or other teachers' unfair actions could complain and vent their feelings without fear.

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This afforded me the opportunity to explain some adult actions which seemed unjustified at first glance.

As a result of this experience in journal writing, my class eventually began thinking as a class, not merely as individuals striving to meet their own needs. They began to accept each other and actually could laugh together at their own shortcomings and sometimes outrageous behaviors.

Upon reflection, I have concluded that dialogue journals are definitely a benefit for me. They enabled me to understand so much more about my students and the reasons for their actions. By the time the year ended, I felt very close to them. Although many of my non-contract hours were spent writing to my students, I knew something very important was happening each time we corresponded. •

A Principal's View of Dialogue Journals

- Jan Mulvaney, former Principal,
Bucknell Elementary, Fairfax CPS

"What can I try next? I've tried every teaching, behavioral and classroom management strategy I know and nothing is working with this class! What do you suggest I DO?" If you are a principal, you may have heard these questions recently. If you're a teacher, you may have asked them.

Over the past seven years as I have worked in a variety of support roles to teachers, I have frequently needed another "trick in my bag" to offer teachers as an alternative to use in the daily challenge of meeting the needs of students. At the beginning of last year, I became interested in dialogue journals when I was seeking alternatives to suggest to a teacher whose sixth grade class was presenting unique concerns. [See the article "Yes, Teacher, There Is Hope!," by Mary Austin in this issue.] The traditional techniques and "tried and true strategies" that had always worked for this teacher, or for me, in previous settings were not working!

As I listened to an explanation of how dialogue journals could be used to improve classroom communication, my mind immediately jumped to the possibility of suggesting dialogue journals for this particular classroom, where the need was to create cohesion and some compatibility among the students. I explored the idea with the classroom teacher and our counseling resource teacher, and we decided to order a set of blank journals and begin as soon as they arrived.

From my perspective as a principal, dialogue journals made the major difference for this class. They provided the structure for these benefits to emerge:

- Students began viewing their teacher as a caring individual who was working to support them, instead of as an authority figure trying to control them.
- A respectful rapport and understanding between students was developed.
- Class problems were resolved in a positive way.
- Each student received support in a very personal, positive way.

These classroom benefits brought further positive results; most important were fewer behavioral problems being referred to the office and a positive, confident teacher able to handle a very difficult situation at a high level of professionalism.

Obviously, the teacher of this classroom is due much credit for her openness and willingness to try a new strategy, and for giving her time and energy to respond to each entry. I saw the time she spent as an excellent investment, because it created the improved student behavior which allowed her to do the job she was hired to do--teach!

I have added dialogue journals to my list of alternatives which I can offer teachers when the circumstances, and the individual teacher's needs and personality, seem appropriate. I find it is the kind of viable option which results in positive changes for both teachers and students. •

The Safety Valve

- Cyndy Shelton
Huntington Park High School, LAUSD

I have been using dialogue journals in my senior high school English classes for the past three years. I do not correct the writing in the journals, but I do give students points for the amount they write; in addition, they may turn them in when they wish, and we do not have a certain amount of time each period for journal writing.

I have found numerous benefits to me, the teacher, that are not per se related to the students' writing improvement. First, I have noticed that I am able to develop a much closer relationship to all of my students than time would permit in the classroom without using the journals. Second, I find that I can use the journals for behavior modification--theirs and mine.

Many of my students are intimidated by me. I'm big, blonde, and brash, and worst of all, I'm loud. While they are often hanging on every word I say, many would die rather than talk to me. However, many of them love "talking" in the journals. Some of them will make a comment in the journal about what went on in class that I know they would not feel comfortable saying out loud.

Some of the students in my fourth period this last semester, for example, loved to goad me into talking about sexism--I had an unusually vehement, macho bunch of senior men in the class.

I found that students who would not join into the discussion would comment on the discussion in their journal entries. The women, who seldom vocally supported my views, would write about their thoughts on the subject. One young woman started to explore her boyfriend's reaction to her working and his double standards. One of the young men who agreed with part of what I had to say continued to try to correct "the errors of my wayward thinking" by quoting other teachers and different material that he was reading.

The second clear benefit to me is that students who are frustrated with me or the class have some place to vent their frustration. The journals are safe. The ones who are upset with me find out quickly that while I usually fight back with them--via the journals--I will not let what they say in the journal affect what I say to them in class.

My seniors must write a term paper which I find as frustrating to teach as they do to learn. Our mutual frustration causes a high stress level during that time. As they research, I have them check with me to make sure that they are doing the process the way I want them to do it. One student resented the way I wanted to check each step and tried to confront me on it in class. I would not let him argue about it during class time--it was a time-waster and detrimental to the educational environment for the others. In his journal he raged every day for two weeks about how childish the checks were and how he refused to do them, but he did turn in the paper--albeit without the checks--and passed the class.

Another student, Hector, virtually screamed at me in his journal for several days after the first progress report because he felt his journal should have earned more points. At one point, he asked a series of questions that I didn't answer; he then wrote:

> *I'm not trying to change my grade by expressing my opinion. You know me better than that. I think your missing the point, I notice you only answer the questions that concern you not the journal.*

I wrote back:

> *I'm not going to be dictated to by an 18-year-old with a bad attitude. You don't want information; you want to attack. So buzz off.*

His answer:

> *Bzzzzzzzzzzzz. I'm 17 years of age. Enough of these bellicose communications. I did some extra credit--its a so 'n' so poem. There will be more by Monday but this ones really to cover up if I get a bad grade.*

My response:

> *God, I'm glad that is over! I have trouble staying mad.*

I love that exchange. And it is indicative of the value of the journal as a tool of real communication. I think teachers and students spend too much time together not to get angry with one another. It is vital to give students the right--and the right place--to blow off steam. I believe that using the journal as a safety valve is one of its most important uses. ●

[Cyndy Shelton is spending this school year as a teacher-researcher with the UCLA Writing Project, studying her own use of dialogue journals.]

Dialogue Journals in Marketing Education

- Kathy Andersen-Smith
Broadneck SHS, Annapolis

In an effort to implement a useful approach to my school's writing across the curriculum program, last year I began using dialogue journals with my Marketing Education Work Experience students. Rather than finding this approach the burden on me that I anticipated, the experience of dialoguing with my students has been enlightening and enjoyable for myself, and I believe it has proved to be a good educational experience for them.

Most important, our dialogues have helped me achieve a number of my goals for this class. The dialogue journal has helped me keep closer tabs on the work lives of my students. It has helped me to know each student in ways I might not have within the constraints of the classroom. Dialoguing has helped me to advise and counsel students on a variety of topics including future educational and career plans. Perhaps most valuable to me as a teacher, the use of the dialogue journals has enabled me to keep the marketing education curriculum relevant to the needs of the students through their feedback to me.

An example of a typical dialogue in my class goes like this:

S: *The work isn't that bad, but I definitely need more money and more hours. I would like to find another job with more hours and more pay. I'm gonna continue to look.*

T: *If you are going to continue to look, have you considered keeping this job during the day in order to get the experience, and looking for another job a couple of nights a week?*

We continued to discuss this particular topic for about three weeks until the student had clarified in her own mind what she wanted to do about her job.

I have found coupling students' dialogue journal writing with Friday wage record completion works effectively. Each Friday, when the students enter class they pick up their journals along with their wage folders. They generally read my comments and begin writing in their journals; when the journal writing is finished, they fill in their wage record. Each week, I suggest a topic related to their work experience, but always encourage them to abandon the suggested topic if they prefer only to address my comments, discuss something important in their life or an issue from class, critique recent activities, or just "jot down some thoughts." About ten to fifteen minutes of classtime is needed for the combined tasks of journal responses and recording of wage information. When done, both journals and wage records are returned to a locking file cabinet--assuring the students of confidentality.

I have found that I am usually able to read and react to about twenty journals in an hour. As both my students and I become accustomed to this kind of direct, informal conversation, the time it takes to react to journal comments tends to decrease.

One more comment about time--the dialogue journals may take me an hour or so to respond to once a week, but so much of the individual counseling that once took up valuable classtime is now accomplished through the dialogue journals.

In their journals, my students have shared with me such diverse issues as the fear of crossing a bridge on the route to work, future entrepreneurial plans, job changes, distress over an upcoming family move, and future educational plans. Even though they can write about anything, the majority of their comments are school- or work-related. Those that aren't are usually problems that affect the student's school and work performance directly, and it's important for me to know about them.

Being aware of the variety of issues that are discussed by the students in their journals has definitely made me a more effective teacher and work coordinator. In addition to all the benefits for me in using dialogue journals, I believe that these dialogues have helped me create in the mind of the students the image of the teacher as a human being who has a life outside the classroom. ●

Time - The Greatest Gift We Can Give Another

- Leslee Reed

"Oh, yes, I'd love to do dialogue journals with my class but I just don't have the time!"

How frequently I have heard that--and so has everyone who has spent some time explaining dialogue journals to another teacher. My first reaction is: "If you only knew what the investment in that time would be for you, as well as your class, you couldn't afford not to take the time."

Each of us has the same amount of time--no question about that. Our choice lies in the investment of our time which will reap the most good for us and our students in the long run. Clearly, time in response to individual journal entries adds up to an enormous value to BOTH teacher and student.

Time has been called "the greatest gift we can give another." A friendly chat lets another know that you care because you have taken time for them to say what it was they wanted to tell you. But our young people seldom have the total undivided attention of an adult for the length of time they would like. Parents are often busy with homemaking cares during the few hours when students are home; teachers have many other students who want to be "heard" and commitments to fulfill.

Of course, there are always those "aggressive" individuals who make their ideas known verbally in spite of the limited amount of time available--and as a result, those who are less demanding are left feeling even more frustrated because they were not able to add to or refute what was being said. Faced with this, all of us would certainly agree that the ideal would be ten minutes each day devoted to each student as an individual, without any distraction. Not only could we allow each student to tell us what is on his or her mind, but the student would be helped by the very process of anticipating the opportunity, and formulating the message to be shared. With a class of 35, that would take about 5.8 hours. Absolutely impossible!

Yet it is just this "impossible" that dialogue journals manage to provide for those willing to take the time--not six hours but 30 minutes to an hour each day at my level (elementary).

Teachers may understand the benefits to students, but wonder of what value it is to them. Early in our educational careers, we learned the basic principle of immdiate feedback or response to stimulate the learner's active thinking and motivation. We assume that principle applies only to our students. Yet as working individuals, we also need this daily stimulation, this immediate feedback, to keep us fresh, vital, and to give us a deep sense of knowing that we are essential to the educational process. The daily responses through dialogue journals do just that!

Unfortunately we spend too much time in meetings that dull our thinking, annoy us and make us feel that time has been wasted. Here is an antidote to those feelings--real response, genuine feelings and the variety and challenge that only a wide-awake group of students can provide. After a long, often difficult day, writing in the journals is a catharsis which leaves me feeling good about myself, stimulated by what was written, and eagerly thinking ahead about doing what I enjoy so much--having real contact with real learners.

For those teachers whose real stumbling block is mountains of papers to grade, I say, "Of course, but have you taken a good look at your grading process and assessed its real value to the students and to you?" There are ways of structuring your class so that the accountability of the assigned task is so clear and specific that your "grading" time is cut way down, and student self-evaluation time is increased. Value of time spent on each of your tasks, relative to its worth to the student and teacher, becomes the equation for creating the time you need.

Taking the time for dialogue journals not only benefits my students; it serves to validate me as a teacher and learner. Such a worthwhile investment! ●

[LESLEE REED is the Los Angeles sixth grade teacher whose use of dialogue journals was discovered and studied by Staton, Shuy, and Kreeft in the original NIE-sponsored study (1982) and in a second NIE study of ESL students (Kreeft, Shuy, Staton, Reed and Morroy, 1985). These studies resulted in the widespread understanding and dissemination of the concept and practice. She continues to provide readers with her expert, sensitive views on dialogue journal use and benefits.]

RESEACH ON TEACHER STRATEGIES

Exploring the Effects of Glib Responses to Journal Entries

- Rob Tierney, Ohio State University

I had two reasons for wanting to explore the use of dialogue journals in my undergraduate language arts class. I wanted to introduce dialogue journals to them, and I wanted to explore what would happen when my responses were more or less sincere. From my observations of peer response groups, teacher-student conferences and evaluative comments on student papers, I recognized that teachers often responded in different ways (at different times) to students, and that some students never paid much attention to those sets of comments which tended to be almost glib (e.g., "good work. I liked the way you developed your topic"; or "needs some work").

To explore with my students the effect of different types of responses, I decided to systematically vary the way I responded to their entries. I chose three response patterns: glib, personal and reflective. A glib response is one that is similar to the 10 to 15 word responses that I (and, I believe, many teachers) tend to compose. For example, a glib response to a student's concern might involve one or two insubstantial statements pertaining to what was discussed. A personal response involved sharing personal experiences or views which paralleled those of the students. I would often talk about my own experiences as a teacher, writer or student. For example, in response to one of my student's descriptions of their initial attempts to conference with a student, I discussed some of my own successful and unsuccessful attempts. Reflective responses involved the use of questions which were intended to have the students think about, explain or elaborate upon certain ideas. For example, a reflective response to a student's description of a teaching encounter might involve some reactions, but would be mainly questions encouraging the student to think more about what happened.

Over the course of the semester, we wrote back and forth at least ten times. To examine the effects of my different response patterns, I assigned students to one of six possible combinations. Some students received personal response patterns to three letters, then reflective followed by glib; other students received reflective followed by personal and then glib; yet others began with glib, and so on.

What happened? It depended on the type of response the student received. Students who received personal and reflective responses were eager to write back to me. They felt as if I had responded to their concerns and addressed their explicit and implicit questions; they became more involved in the course. At the same time, their confidence as writers grew.

If a student received a glib response, his or her desire to write back diminished. Some complained that they did not know what to say and, in fact, the amount of writing they generated lessened. Interestingly, students did not complain about receiving this type of response unless they had received some which were either personal or reflective prior to the glib response. The following letter from one of my students will give you a feel for how students reacted to glib responses once they had experienced other kinds of responses.

Rob,

In your response to my second letter (concerning feedback), you said you don't know if you give good feedback. Well, to be truthful, I was disappointed at your response to my third letter (about the ocean). Your response was "Me, too. Thanks for sharing your writing. I love the ocean, too." As soon as I read that I thought "Is that all?" I felt as if I had presented a problem (my difficulty in figuring out a way to record what I had experienced). I understand that you are not Dear Abby: I wish that you could have either shared a similar experience or suggested some possible solutions. I have been pleased with your feedback on my first and second letters. I was just disappointed with this last one.

Laurie

P.S. I hope that you don't think I am too direct.

(Please note that although my response was somewhat personal, it was very brief and lacked any substantial response to her concerns.)

Toward the end of the semester, we took time out to reflect upon the use of dialogue

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journals and I told them how I had purposely varied the responses I gave. As we discussed what happened, we agreed that the journals enabled us to address a variety of concerns and issues which otherwise would have gone unexplored. It enabled us to establish a form of communication. From my perspective, it proved to be invaluable for counselling students who were contemplating dropping out of the program. They were relieved to discover that I was not as insincere as my occasional glib responses would suggest and that, in fact, I had as much difficulty composing them as they had receiving them. Indeed, the experience of receiving a glib comment would not be forgotten. Most importantly, many of us realized that these encounters with glibness had cured us of responding this way to others.

Just as a sidenote, the findings I have described prompted me to ask another question. Would elementary school children embrace journals and be equally susceptible to the effects of various kinds of responses? In a follow-up study at the elementary level, the children were even more sensitive to the various responses they received. ●

Mapping Conversational Roles in Dialogue Writing

- Martha K. Dolly, Frostburg State College

Researchers have long been studying what goes on between teachers and students in classrooms, including teachers' uses of questioning to control classroom interaction. A new and promising area of study is interaction in dialogue writing, which allows both partners to use a wider variety of strategies and language functions than is possible in the classroom. My dissertation research proposes a means of mapping dialogue journal interaction so we can evaluate how fully we are encouraging our students to participate in shaping the written dialogue.

We know from research and experience that dialogue writing allows students an opportunity to develop language abilities they don't often get a chance to practice in the classroom: to pursue topics of their own choosing (even questioning the teacher in the process) and to learn to extend and manage discourse, both oral and written. But there seems to be a great deal of variation in the amount of responsibility students assume. Some students readily nominate and pursue topics (often soliciting input from the teacher), while others prefer to rely on their (perhaps quite willing) partner to determine the direction of the conversation. One teenage girl from Spain apologized at the end of one brief entry: "I don't know what to tell you because you didn't ask anything else."

No speaker, native or non-native, can truly participate in a conversation, written or oral, by merely responding to the other partner. Each participant must solicit input as well as respond appropriately. Each must be willing to acknowledge lack of comprehension and take steps to repair it. To encourage students to engage more fully in managing the dialogue and negotiating meaning, we might begin by looking at the conversational roles each is playing. For example, in comparing two "successful" conversations, I discovered that one young man was playing a variety of conversational roles (initiating, responding, reacting, and repairing), while the other was primarily a prolific responder who seemed to be stuck in that role.

My dissertation suggests a method of analyzing moves and assessing conversational roles. It focuses on two main move categories: advancing (initiating, responding, reacting) and repairing (identifying and addressing problems of language and meaning). The same moves are available to both partners, but each partner usually prefers some moves to others. By mapping the moves across entries, we can determine how, and how fully, each partner is participating and perhaps encourage some students to take on a wider variety of roles.

I believe this project will be helpful to teachers using dialogue journals with a variety of student populations, since all successful dialogue writing requires the active participation of both partners. The subjects of this study are twelve adult ESL students (representing seven native languages). In my teaching, I use dialogue journals primarily with American foreign language and freshman composition students, and I expect my findings to help me dialogue

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more effectively with them as well as with the ESL students. The purpose of the study is not to suggest that there is any one optimal balance of roles but to provide an analytical procedure that others can adapt to their own situations, to foster the kind of student-teacher interaction that to them seems most appropriate. I hope this project will contribute to our growing understanding of the value of dialogue writing. ●

Research on Dialogue Journals - NEXT ISSUE

Doing research, especially on dialogue journals, can be lonely and frustrating at times--but there are both hope and help in finding out what others have done. We want to increase the "networking" among people who have started to do good work on attributes or effects of dialogue journal communication. The informal "research network" this newsletter makes possible might give you someone to talk to about your work, and it will allow us to refer other people to you who want to know about the area in which you are most interested (and probably expert!).

Next issue will be devoted to (actually, taken over by) summaries of the most recent research we know about--especially studies that are now in progress. If you don't think we know about YOUR work, send us a 250-300 word summary by February 15, 1987. We'll try to include as many as possible.

Some of the new work-in-progress we do know about includes research on the possible benefits of dialogue journals with high-risk adolescent students, with high school writers, learning handicapped students, and first grade students. There are also several excellent completed studies on the development of "voice" and on language development of ESL children.

A REMINDER: If you can't wait, remember that the BACK ISSUES includes an up-to-date publications list and abstracts of all the completed dissertations that we know about.

"Interactive" Writing with Computers: One Solution to the Time Problem

- Dennis Sayers, New England BESC
University of Hartford

Editor's Note: With the outgrowth of computers in public schools, more and more teachers are becoming computer literate, and even computer dependent. Dialogue journals certainly can be done on computers as readily as with paper and pencil. Now there is a new software program available called DIALOG MAKER, developed by our friends Dennis Sayers, Margaret Riel, and Jim Levin (of UCSD), for use as a management system for interactive writing on computers. We are especially pleased to be able to have Dennis Sayers describe DIALOG MAKER for us.

Interactive word processing can offer teachers one workable solution to the challenge of how to "make time" for dialogue journals in their classrooms. The DIALOG MAKER is an interactive word processor that helps a teacher create her half of a "written conversation" with each member of a large group of students. Bilingual English-Spanish, and English-French versions for Apple II computers are available from InterLearn, a software publishing cooperative which is based at the University of California-San Diego.

"Interactive" is an overworked term in discussions of computer technology, especially tiresome whenever it stands for little more than pushing a single key in response to a programmed stimulus. This use--or rather, abuse--of the word is particularly insulting for all of us who are committed to the personal and pedagogical value of truly interactive writing. In what sense, then, is the DIALOG MAKER really interactive?

The DIALOG MAKER promotes the dialogue journal process by helping a teacher to blend two kinds of messages--general and personal--to many students. Imagine this situation. Before class, a teacher writes a GENERAL message to the whole group about a shared experience--say, a field trip. Next, she writes PERSONAL messages to each student, and closes with a GENERAL message to all students.

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Later, students will individually "hold up" their end of the (written) conversation on the computer. As soon as a student has responded to the string of GENERAL, PERSONAL and GENERAL messages, the computer prints out a playscript--featuring the teacher and that student as the principal actors.

For example, when Maria sits down at the computer to read and to respond to what her teacher has written the night before, she sees:

[Mrs. Rainer]: The field trip to the museum was such a treat. It's great to get away from school sometimes, isn't it? The dinosaur exhibit reminded me of models of reptiles I used to build--only huge! I also thought they did a neat job of explaining how ocean curents work--that was my favorite exhibit by far.

Maria doesn't realize it, but this is a GENERAL message the teacher has sent to all her students. The DIALOG MAKER pauses for Maria to write back. Maria signals when she is done, and then she reads this list of options on the screen:

```
1 Nathan
2 Maria
3 Ivette
.....
19 Judy
20 Edgar
Choose (1..20):
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When Maria selects "2," the DIALOG MAKER will show the PERSONAL message the teacher wrote her and will pause for Maria to write her reactions. (Let's NOT peek at the selections not written to her--after all, it is private!)

Finally, Maria answers the teacher's closing GENERAL message. The printout of her dialogue with the teacher has a personal touch, as will the dialogue with each other student. Of course, the teacher gets a printout of each playscript, which she will read before starting the next round of writing with the DIALOG MAKER.

Veteran "dialogue journalers" will appreciate how this approach to interactive writing facilitates working with large groups. The teacher in the example above, by adding two general messages to twenty personal ones, has tripled the amount of writing each student can respond to. Indeed, there ARE occasions when we would welcome each student's reaction to a general message, but how many of us balk at writing the same thing twenty times--or twenty different ways--to each and every one of our pupils? Often, we must choose to ignore commonalities, keeping our dialogue journals at a strictly individual level.

Let's return to the term interactive word processing. Most teachers by now are aware of the educational potential of word processing, and many have incorporated this general-purpose computer tool into their teaching. Yet very few educators have heard of interactive word processing. The concept is quite simple: Essentially, a word processor is linked to a program that acts as a writing coach. An interactive word processor is designed to offer a range of suggestions or "writing prompts"--and then to pause and wait for the teacher or student to write back.

Now the DIALOG MAKER interacts with the teacher and with students in distinct ways. The DIALOG MAKER is a "permanent" program that a teacher uses to design another "disposable" program for her students, which is eventually removed after the last student writes back. In other words, the DIALOG MAKER offers the teacher "journal writing prompts" in English, French or Spanish) to assist her in creating a series of conversational openers. At the same time, the DIALOG MAKER literally writes a computer program for the teacher by inserting programming symbols that will "pause" for the students to respond later.

When using the disposable program, each student sees only the writing prompts typed by the teacher--in the form of her authentic messages that invite writing. The resulting chain of interactions closely resembles the give-and-take of a spoken conversation, especially in its final playscript form. ●

[For more information about purchasing Dialog Maker, write:
Interlearn
Box 342
Cardiff-by-the-Sea, CA 92007
Current price is $49.95 and requires an Apple with two disk drives.]

Notes from the Field

These dialogue journal entries, submitted by Phillip Venditti and Robert Bahruth from their dialogues with ESL students at Austin Community College, show two important aspects of dialogue journals with adults learning English as a second language: They change and improve the student-teacher relationship and they provide a wonderful place to discuss information and misunderstandings. These entries occurred as students and teacher began reflecting on their experience at the end of the semester.

Ben: *By diag journal the relationship between teacher and students got more improvement. It increases our understanding each other, changes the old traditions. It is as if you were our classmates. I don't know about American students. In China, students are afraid when they are talking with teachers. More or less they feel nerves. But in your class I never feel that. I am very glad to have your class.*

* * * *

Maria: *Today is my co-worker's birthday. She had a party in the company's cafeteria. I saw her preparing the party with her friend. I was in the cafeteria but I didn't know that it was her party until I got back to work. I wasn't invited to the party. When I was back to the cafeteria for a break after working time, the party was over everything was cleaned up. She came to me and asked "Did you get a piece of cake?" If you were me, what do you think about her? We have been working together for a long time. Is it a normal way to ask others if they want to have the rest of a cake?*

Teacher: *What happened may have been the result of a misunderstanding. Maybe she expected all of her friends to just come without inviting them. In your country it may be necessary to invite each person, but if this was just an informal gathering she may not have invited anyone. If you think she is your friend why don't you ask her? Perhaps she is wondering why you didn't come to eat cake as well!*

Dialogue Journals as a Pathway to Publication

Dr. Bill Stokoe (formerly of the Linguistics Research Laboratory, Gallaudet College) has sent on to us this letter.

Dear Bill,

Two summers ago, I took a course from you that entailed keeping a dialogue journal. An unexpected trip to Japan nipped off the end of the course and I turned in the journal late after returning. You made the generous suggestion that perhaps parts of it--parts about the trip to Japan--could be published. Almost entirely because of your suggestion, I sent a segment (a bit rewritten) to The Washington Post. It was in last Sunday's paper.

So thanks, thanks, thanks. And thanks.

Sincerely,
Cathryn Carroll

IT'S YOUR TURN NOW! Using Dialogue Journals with Hearing-Impaired Students

by Cindy Bailes, Susan Searls, Jean Slobodzian, and Jana Staton

AT LAST, one of the several handbooks on dialogue journals is IN PRINT. It's Your Turn Now!, for teachers of elementary or secondary students, hearing-impaired or not, is on the effective use of dialogue journals to open new paths for communication, language growth, and understanding.

The handbook is full of wonderful examples of how very young children can get started in written dialogues. Teacher questions and answers, frustrations and successes are reviewed in a practical, direct way, and a theoretical summary is included.

Three of the co-authors are teachers at Gallaudet's Kendall Demonstration Elementary School and Model Secondary School, and have drawn on their extensive classroom experience using dialogue journals.

TO ORDER: Cost is $9.95 + $1.50 post. [Postage for Can., Alas., Haw., Carib., $4.50; Overseas, $6.00]

Send check or completed purchase order to:
Outreach Products
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Washington, DC 20002
OR PHONE, toll-free: 800/672-7720, Ext. 5341

Editorial and Subscription Policy.

- A Few Thoughts

DIALOGUE started out as an informal means for communicating about the use of dialogue journals with other researchers, teachers and educators. It has grown without any publicity from a freebie sent to 100 people in the spring of 1982 to 400 paid subscribers from the USA and 16 other countries by 1986. We have tried to keep the list to a manageable number, and hope that our secondary readership is much larger through xeroxing and sharing the copies.

Some readers have been interested in seeing DIALOGUE grow into a full-fledged journal [called THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL, obviously]. The idea is tempting, but so far the balance has tipped in favor of keeping the newsletter the way it is for now. One major reason is that we know that DIALOGUE is actually read, unlike the journals which inevitably get put on our shelves "for later" after a quick scan of the contents. So for the present we plan to stay with a newsletter format rather than expand, and to concentrate on further improvements in layout, graphics and other features to make it even more readable and lively.

Our subscription fee covers only the cost of printing and mailing, which are increasing even without the improvements we have planned. In 1987 the subscription price will double to $6.00 for three issues a year (spring, fall and winter, approximately). We hope that is still a bargain.

We still welcome short articles and letters from all of you, and are interested in suggestions for future issues. Contributions are especially welcomed which would fit in with the themes of the 1987 issues:

- Research and research issues (spring, 1987)
- Classroom management and behavior (summer/fall, 1987)
- Implications from the use of dialogue journals with deaf students (winter, 1987)

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), which is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CLEAR, write: Dialogue, CLEAR, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 - 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

DIALOGUE appears approximately three times a year, at a cost of $6.00 to cover duplication and mailing. A volume of back issues is available for $7.00. Make checks payable to Handbook Press.

DIALOGUE
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